The Public Agenda Foundation

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CRIME AND CORRECTIONS: A REVIEW OF PUBLIC OPINION DATA SINCE 1975

CRIME AND CORRECTIONS:
A Review of Public Opinion Data Since 1975

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This is one of two reports, prepared by the Public Agenda Foundation for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, on the American public's attitudes towards crime and the criminal justice system. The two reports are designed to be complementary.

One report draws upon a series of focussed group discussions, conducted in different cities around the country, that explored the reasons for people's views on the subject and analyzed changes in their attitudes as they received fresh information or were subjected to different arguments. Such an indepth examination of people's responses is illuminating, but the hypotheses it yields about public attitudes cannot be quantified. This present volume, on the other hand, presents findings drawn from an analysis of survey data collected under various auspices over the past decade: The information it contains is quantifiable data on American public attitudes towards crime and the criminal justice system, as recorded in response to various specific questions on the topic.

The two volumes are complementary in that the findings of one tends to clarify or objectify what is ambiguous or subjective in the other. Thus, for example, the present volume finds, in one instance, that Americans' views about the main goal of prisons seem to be influenced (to an unusual extent) by the precise wording of different survey questions. And certainly the data suggest that the public is of two minds in defining the primary purpose of imprisonment -- or that it sees more purposes than one, and may give primacy to different purposes in different contexts. The more extensive probing of the group interviews, described in the

companion volume, show that this is indeed the case: The purposes that people recognize are not mutually exclusive, nor are their responses more than apparently inconsistent. When people focus on the rising crime rate, they tend to stress the goals of punishment and the protection of society. When they focus on the role of prisons themselves, there is greater emphasis on rehabilitation. This type of inconsistency is often found in survey research on issues where people have not fully resolved their feelings -- and it is a characteristic of survey methodology that people are sometimes forced to see choices as if they were mutually exclusive, when people often accept them as complementary.

The data in this report were collected and analyzed over the spring and early summer by Mary Komarnicki, drawing on the resources of the Roper Center in Storrs, Connecticut. A vast quantity of data was explored, covering surveys administered over the past fifteen years and relating to more than a dozen sub-topics within the issue of crime and the criminal justice system. Ms. Komarnicki's comprehensive analysis was then further refined by John Doble and edited into the six sections of this report, reflecting sub-topics that we believe will make the data most conveniently accessible. The findings reflect Public Agenda's analysis of the aggregated data yielded by the research, but the tables in this volume -- the actual data -- have been carefully selected to be at once representative and manageable. The authors acknowledge with appreciation the substantive contribution that Judy Kallick has made to this work, and the advice and editorial skills of Jean Johnson and Robert Kingston throughout the project.

SECTION I:

CRIME AS A NATIONAL PROBLEM

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FINDING #1

IN NUMEROUS SURVEYS SINCE 1971, AMERICANS HAVE RANKED CRIME AS ONE OF THE TOP PROBLEMS FACING THE U.S.

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Detailed Observation

While never ranked as the top concern, crime and safety in the streets have consistently ranked high on the public list of concerns since the early 1970s. Only economic issues and, most recently, concern about nuclear war tend to rank higher. (Tables #1-1 through #1-5 display this trend.)

TABLE #1-1

Q: "What are the main issues or problems facing the country that particularly worry or concern you?"

	July 1985 %	Sept. 1984 %	May 1981 %	Oct. 1980 %	Aug. 1979 %	May 1978 %	July 1977 %
Unemployment/jobs	21	28	15	17	7	14	27
Need for a balanced budget/government spending	21	17	6	3	1	--	4
War/danger of war	16	17	3	10	--	--	--
Nuclear arms race/arms control	13	19	8	10[2]	--	--	--
Inflation/high prices	12	19	62[1]	64[1]	57[1]	66	41
Crime/safety in the streets	8	6	20	5	6	8	12
Taxes/tax reform	8	7	11	7	4	14	10
Mideast/Israel/Lebanon	5	2	2	2	4	6	5
The environment	4	3	--	--	--	--	4
Central America	4	3	2	--	--	3[3]	--
Not Sure/Don't Know	7	7	3	4	2	6	8

1 Included: "the economy"
2 Worded: "defense/strong military"
3 Worded: "Panama Canal"
4 Worded: "government spending"

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White, Inc., national (registered voters), (July 1985: n = 1013); (Sept. 1984: n = 1023); (May 1981: n = 1221); (Oct. 1980: n = 1622); (Aug. 1979: n = 1049); (June 1978: n = 1022); (July 1977: n = 1044).

TABLE #1-2

Q: "Which one of those problems I just mentioned do you consider the most important right now, abortion, or crime, or the environment, or being close to the special interests, or prayers in public schools, or protecting civil rights?"

	Oct. 1984	April 1984
	%	%
Crime	37	43
Protecting civil rights	19	18
Environment	16	14
Abortion	10	8
Prayer in public schools	7	7
Being close to the special interests	3	3
None (vol.)	1	1
All equally (vol.)	5	4
Not sure	2	2

Source: Los Angeles Times, national (registered voters), Oct. 1984, n = 4831); (April 1984: n = 1878).

TABLE #1-3

Q: "Which one of the following do you think is the most important domestic problem facing this country today...inflation, unemployment, crime, high interest rates, pollution, or shortage of housing?"*

	Jan. 1982	Oct. 1981
	%	%
Inflation	33	40
Unemployment	31	20
High interest rates	16	17
Crime	11	15
Pollution	1	na*
Shortage of housing	1	na*
No opinion	7	5

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, national (Jan. 1982: sample size not available); (Oct. 1981: n = 1200).

Detailed Observation

Even among those who do not name crime as one of the country's most important problems, more than 9 in 10 said it was important when asked about it directly.

TABLE #1-4

Q: "What about crime, would you say it's an important problem in this country or not so important?"

(Asked of those who did not mention crime as either the most important or second most important problem facing the country, 92% of total sample.)

	%
Important	94
Not so important	5
Somewhere in between (vol.)	1

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

Detailed Observation

Large majorities of Americans consistently state that they are very concerned about crime. With virtual unanimity, they see controlling crime as important to the quality of life.

TABLE #1-5

Q: "Here are some things that have been reported in the news recently. Would you tell me how personally concerned you are about each -- very concerned, somewhat concerned, not very concerned, or not at all concerned?"

"...reports of crime and lawlessness."

	Aug. 1983	July 1982
	%	%
Very concerned	70	74
Somewhat concerned	25	23
Not very concerned	4	3
Not at all concerned	1	8
Don't know	*	*

* = less than .5 percent

Source: Roper, national, (Aug. 1983: n = 2000); (July 1982: n = 2000).

TABLE #1-6

Q: "No matter how good a person's life happens to be, everyone has problems from time to time, or things they are concerned about. Here are some things people have told us they are concerned about. Would you read down that list and then tell me for each one whether that happens to be a real concern of yours, or something of a concern, or something you're not concerned about?..."

"...crime and lawlessness."

	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1981	Oct. 1979
	%	%	%
A real concern	68	69	51
Something of a concern	28	26	38
Not concerned	4	4	10
Doesn't apply to me (vol.)	1	*	*
Don't know		*	*

* less than .5 percent

Source: Roper, national, (1983: n = 2000); (Jan. 1981: n = 2000); Roper for Virginia Slims, Oct. 1979, national, n = 3924.

TABLE #1-7

Q: "I would like to read you some factors that can affect the quality of life in this country. As far as you are personally concerned, for each of these, would you tell me if it is very important in making the quality of life better, only somewhat important, or hardly important at all in making the quality of life better?..."

"...Controlling crime."

	June 1982	April/May 1978
	%	%
Very important	93	92
Only somewhat important	6	na
Hardly important at all	*	na
Not sure	1	na

* less than .5 percent

Sources: Harris for the Natural Resources Council of America, June 1982, national, n = 1253.
Harris, April-May 1978, national, n = 1567.

****

FINDING #2

AMERICANS OVERWHELMINGLY AGREE THAT THE CRIME RATE HAS INCREASED SHARPLY OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS. LARGE MAJORITIES SAY THEY ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT CRIME AND MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY THAN THEY WERE IN THE PAST.

****

TABLE #2-1

Q: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Crime has increased in the last twenty years.'?"*

	%
Yes	95
No	5

* Question wording was reconstructed from the written report which may not exactly match the wording used in the actual survey.

Source: Norris Cooperative for the Michigan Prison and Jail Overcrowding Project, June 1985, State of Michigan residents, n = 820.

TABLE #2-2

Q: "Over the last 20 years, do you feel that crime in the United States has increased considerably, stayed at about the same level, or decreased?"

	%
Increased considerably	86
Stayed about the same	11
Decreased	3
Not sure (vol)	1

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for Time, June 1982, national (registered voters), n = 1010.

TABLE #2-3

Q: "For each of the items on this card please tell me if compared to 20 years ago you feel society today is exposed to more risk or less risk?"

	Public (1,488)	Top Corporate Executives (402)	Investors Lenders (104)	Congress (47)	Federal Regulators (47)
	%	%	%	%	%
Those saying "More Risk"					
Crime & personal safety	85	85	87	87	68
The chemicals we use	81	46	50	77	79
International political stability	73	81	80	83	62
Energy sources	71	58	57	68	57
Methods of travel	62	25	21	30	17
Domestic political stability	61	61	63	60	34
Water supply	60	31	44	43	43
Personal financial security	59	47	57	66	45
Food supply	56	17	32	34	23
Household products	52	20	16	36	34
Occupational safety	32	7	10	6	9
Medical cure	31	5	4	4	19

Source: Harris for Marsh and McLennan, Dec. 1979-March 1980, national, (See number in parentheses for the sample size of each sub-group.)

Detailed Observation

Five years ago, almost 2 out of 3 citizens expressed more concern about their personal safety than the year before, and 85 percent were more concerned than they had been five years earlier.

TABLE #2-4

Q: "Are you more or less concerned about crime now than you were five years ago, or hasn't your concern about crime changed?"

	%
More concerned	85
Less concerned	2
No change	13

Source: NBC News/Associated Press, July 1981, national, n = 1599.

TABLE #2-5

Q: "In thinking about crime, are you more or less concerned about your personal safety now than you were a year ago?"

	%
More concerned	64
Same concern (vol)	28
Less concerned	7
Not sure	1

Source: NBC News/Associated Press, Nov. 1981, national, n = 1602.

Detailed Observation

Of those who view crime as one of the most important issues, eight out of ten feel that their opinions on the issue are unlikely to change.

TABLE #2-6

Q: "How important is the crime issue to you--would you say it is one of the most important, important, not very important, or not important at all?"

	%
One of the most important issues	33
An important issue	59
Not very/at all important	6
Don't know	1

Source: National Opinion Research Center, Feb. - April 1984, national, n = 1473.

TABLE #2-7

Q: "How firm are you about your opinion on crime--would you say you are very likely to change your opinion, somewhat likely to change, somewhat unlikely to change, or very unlikely to change?" (Asked only of those who responded "most important" to the question in Table #2-6 above.)

	%	%
Very likely to change	2	
		> 17
Somewhat likely to change	15	
Somewhat unlikely to change	28	
		> 80
Very unlikely to change	52	
Don't know	3	

Source: National Opinion Research Center, Feb. - April 1984, national, n = 1473. (subsample who received this question: n = 484).

****

FINDING #3

WHILE AMERICANS HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY CONCERNED ABOUT CRIME IN A GENERAL SENSE, MOST DO NOT SEE CRIME AS A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY. IN 1982, SOLID MAJORITIES SAID THAT VIOLENT CRIME WAS A MINOR PROBLEM IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD.

****

Detailed Observation

Large majorities do not see crime as a serious problem in their own community, and one in three say there is "hardly any" crime in their community. Fewer than one in five ranks crime as "more serious" than other problems facing their own community.

TABLE #3-1

Q: "Now concerning crime. In general, do you believe that in your community crime is a very serious problem, a fairly serious problem, not very serious, or hardly a problem at all?"

	%	%
Very serious	7	
		> 26
Fairly serious	19	
Not very serious	34	
		> 73
Hardly any crime problems	39	
Not sure	1	

Source: Los Angeles Times, July 1985, national, n = 2627.

TABLE #3-2

Q: "Now concerning crime. In general, do you believe that in your community crime is more serious than other problems, just as serious, or not as serious as other problems."

	%
More serious	19
Just as serious	39
Not as serious	40
Don't know/No answer	2

Source: Associated Press/Media General, Feb. 1985, national, n = 1532.

Detailed Observation

Only 1 in 10 said violent crime was a major problem in their own neighborhood.

TABLE #3-3

Q: "Thinking of your own neighborhood, would you say that violent crime is one of the biggest problems in your neighborhood, one of its smallest problems, or what?"

	%
One of the biggest	11
One of the smallest	75
Somewhere in between (Vol.)	12
No opinion	1

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

****

FINDING #4

OVER THE PAST DECADE, MAJORITIES HAVE SAID THAT THE CRIME RATE IN THE COUNTRY IS INCREASING AND THAT IT IS MUCH HIGHER THAN IT WAS 20 YEARS BEFORE. TODAY, HOWEVER, PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY THAT THE INCIDENCE OF CRIME IN THEIR COMMUNITY IS FAIRLY STABLE.

****

TABLE #4-1

Q: "In the past year, do you feel the crime rate in your area has been increasing, decreasing, or has it remained the same as it was before?"

	Increasing	Decreasing	Remained the same	Not Sure
	%	%	%	%
Jan. 1985 (Harris)	40	17	42	1
Jan. 1983 (Gallup)*	37	17	36	10
Jan. 1982 (Gallup)*	47	17	28	8
Sept. 1981 (Harris)	59	6	34	1
Jan. 1981 (Gallup for Newsweek)	58	14	24	4
Jan. 1981 (Harris)	68	4	27	1
Nov. 1977 (Gallup)*	43	17	32	9
1977 (Harris)[1]	58	6	33	3
1975 (Harris)[1]	70	3	24	3
1973 (Harris)[1]	48	7	40	5
1970 (Harris)[1]	62	3	30	5
1967 (Harris)[1]	47	4	43	7

* Question wording: "Is there more crime in this area than there was a year ago?"

[1] Month of survey not available.

Note: Sample sizes of each survey approximate 1250.

Detailed Observation

In 1982, slightly fewer than 1 in 4 of the public reported that violent crime in their neighborhood was increasing, although more than 8 in 10 believed that the crime rate in the country as a whole was increasing.

TABLE #4-2

Q: "And what about the neighborhood where you live, would you say that violent crime is going up or down or what?"

	%
Going up	24
Going down	22
Staying about the same (Vol.)	51
No opinion	3

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

TABLE #4-3

Q: "Just your best guess, would you say that the crime rate in this country is going up, going down or what?"

	%
Going up	84
Going down	6
Staying about the same (vol.)	9
No opinion	1

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

****

FINDING #5

WHILE ONLY A MINORITY SAY THAT CRIME IN THEIR COMMUNITY IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM, NEAR MAJORITIES ARE PERSONALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE INCREASE IN CRIME IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND ONE IN THREE IS AFRAID OF BECOMING A VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME.

****

TABLE #5-1

Q: "People all have different concerns about what's going on in the world these days, but you can't worry about everything all the time. Will you tell me for each of the following whether right now this is something that worries you personally a lot, a little, or not at all?"

"...The increase of crime in my community."

	July 1985	Dec. 1984	Jan. 1984	Dec. 1983
	%	%	%	%
A lot	45	49	52	53
A little	32	33	35	34
Not at all	23	18	13	13
Not sure (vol.)	1	--	1	--

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for Time, national (registered voters), (July 1985; n = 1013); (Dec. 1984: n = 1024); (Jan. 1984: n = 1021); (Dec. 1983: n = 1000).

TABLE #5-2

Q: "In the last three years, do you think your life has become more dangerous because of crime, less dangerous, or hasn't it changed?"

	%
More dangerous	47
No change	46
Less dangerous	6
Not sure	1

Source: NBC News, Feb. 1985, national, n = 1598.

Detailed Observation

One American in three believes that it is at least somewhat likely that he will become a victim of a violent crime.

TABLE #5-3

Q: "How would you rate the chances of your being the victim of a violent crime someday -- would you say you are very likely to be the victim of a violent crime, somewhat likely to be a victim, somewhat unlikely or very unlikely."

	%	%
Very likely	6	
		> 33
Somewhat likely	27	
Somewhat unlikely	32	
		> 63
Very unlikely	31	
No opinion	3	

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

TABLE #5-4

Q: "Are you personally fearful or not about the possibility of being a victim of physical violence?"

	%
Yes	38
No	59
No opinion	3

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, Sept. 1981, national, n = 1200.

Detailed Observation

However, compared to the chance of being in an automobile accidents, people feel much less likely to become a victim of crime.

TABLE #5-5

Q: "Of the situations that you deal with every day, which ones do you consider to be the riskiest?"

	%
Driving, bad drivers, drunk/stoned drivers, not driving defensively, auto accidents	68
Crime, assaults, muggings	15
Hazards on the job	15
Falls at home	9
Operating machinery/heavy equipment	7
Toxic waste, toxic chemicals, chemical risk	5
Raising children, risks involving children	5
Health, old age	5
Financial risk, investments	4
Fire	4
Storms, weather	3
Lose job, no income, having enough money	3
Air pollution	2
Lifting injury, lifting heavy things	1
All other mentions	5
Not sure/no risks	10

Source: Harris for ITT, Aug. 1983, national, n = 1255.

****

FINDING #6

WHILE MOST AMERICANS FEEL SAFE AND SECURE IN THEIR HOMES, FOUR IN TEN FEEL AFRAID TO WALK SOMEWHERE WITHIN A MILE OF THEIR HOME ALONE AT NIGHT.

****

TABLE #6-1

Q: "How about at home at night--do you feel safe and secure, or not?"

	Feb.-Apr. 1982	Nov. 1977
	%	%
Yes, feel safe at home	86	85
No, don't feel safe at home	14	15

Source: National Opinion Research Center, Feb.-April, 1982, national, n = 1506.
Gallup, Nov. 1977, national, n = 1506.

TABLE #6-2

Q: "Is there any area around here--that is, within a mile--where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?"

	Yes	No
	%	%
Feb-April 1985 (NORC)*	40	59
Feb-April 1984 (NORC)	42	57
Feb-April 1982 (NORC)	47	53
Feb-April 1980 (NORC)	43	56
Feb-April 1978 (NORC)	45	55
Feb-April 1977 (NORC)	45	55
Feb-April 1976 (NORC)	44	56
June 1975 (Gallup)	45	55
Feb-April 1974 (NORC)	45	55
Feb-April 1973 (NORC)	41	59

* National Opinion Research Center
Note: Sample sizes for all surveys approximate 1500.

****

FINDING #7

SEVEN OUT OF TEN AMERICANS HAVE SPECIFIC FEARS OF BEING MURDERED, RAPED, OR ASSAULTED.

****

TABLE #7-1

	Concrete Fear[1] of Crime		Formless Fear[2] of Crime	
	%	%	%	%
Very High	19		13	
High	22	70	24	75
Moderate	29		38	
Low	30		25	

1 Concrete fear is defined as the fear of being murdered, sexually assaulted or raped, mugged, knifed beaten up or being held up by an armed robber.

2 Formless fear is defined as how safe people feel being out alone during the day and at night in the central business district, main shopping center, in their neighborhood, or alone at home.

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

Detailed Observation

As recently as 1984, more than 2 out of 3 say street crime is a very serious threat to society, and more dangerous than the threat of organized crime or terrorist groups.

TABLE #7-2

Q: "Here is a list of some different things people have said are threats to our society. For each one would you tell me whether you think it is a very serious threat these days to citizens like yourself, a moderately serious threat, not much of a threat, or no threat at all?"

"...Crime in the streets."

	%	%
Very serious threat	68	
		> 94
Moderately serious threat	26	
Not much of a threat or no threat	5	

Source: Roper, Jan. 1984, national, n = 2000.

TABLE #7-3

Q: "In your opinion, which one of the following is the greatest threat to American Society?"

"...Organized crime, crime on the street, or terrorist groups?"

	%
Crime on the street	44
Organized crime	30
Terrorist groups	19
No opinion	7

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, Nov. 1981, national, n = 1200.

****

FINDING #8

WOMEN, BLACKS, THE ELDERLY AND PEOPLE LIVING IN LARGE CITIES EXPRESS MORE FEAR OF CRIME THAN DO PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN RURAL AREAS.

****

TABLE #8-1

	Formless Fear[1]	Concrete Fear[2]
	High %	High %
Community Type:		
Large City	54	52
Small City	33	41
Rural	31	31
Suburb	30	39
Age:		
18-29	36	49
30-39	30	46
40-49	34	34
50-59	41	40
60 +	43	33
Sex:		
Female	46	48
Male	34	26
Race:		
Black	48	48
White	34	40

1 Formless fear is defined as how safe people feel being out alone during the day and at night in the central business district, main shopping center, in their neighborhood, or alone at home.

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc., April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

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FINDING #9

LOWER LEVELS OF FEAR IN RURAL AREAS AND THE SUBURBS MAY BE EXPLAINED IN PART BY PERCEPTIONS OF A GREATER LIKELIHOOD THAT THEIR NEIGHBORS ARE FELT TO BE LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS WHO WOULD COME TO A PERSON'S AIDE IN CASE OF AN ATTACK.

****

Detailed Observation

In 1980, larger proportions of whites, those with higher incomes, and residents of rural areas, the suburbs and small cities felt that all their neighbors were quiet and law-abiding.

TABLE #9-1

Q: "What percentage of the people who live in your neighborhood are quiet and law-abiding?"

	All are Law Abiding %	Only Some are Law Abiding %
Total:	69	31
Household Income:		
$26,000 or more	82	18
$11,000-$25,999	66	34
Under $11,000	62	38
Race:		
White	73	27
Black	50	50
Type of Community:		
Rural	75	25
Suburb	76	24
Small City	73	27
Large City	48	52

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

Detailed Observation

Compared to residents of urban areas, many more people in rural areas felt that their neighbors would personally intervene if they were being attacked.

TABLE #9-2

Q: "If your neighbors noticed you were being attacked, would they..."

	Rural	Suburb	Small City	Large City
	%	%	%	%
"...Call the police and personally intervene?"	77	65	67	52
"...Call the police?"	23	35	33	48

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

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FINDING #10

AMERICANS FEARS ABOUT CRIME ARE BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. FOR OVER A DECADE, ONE IN FOUR HAS HAD A MEMBER OF THE HOUSEHOLD VICTIMIZED BY CRIME WITHIN THE PAST YEAR. HOWEVER, THE PERCENTAGE SAYING THEY HAVE BEEN VICTIMIZED BY CRIME WITHI THE PAST YEAR HAS DECREASED SINCE MID-1984.

****

Detailed Observation

Since 1972, and until the past two years, about 1 American in 4 has lived in a household where at least one member has been a crime victim. However, since mid-1984, reports of crime have decreased.

TABLE #10-1

Q: "During the last 12 months, have any of these happened to you or a member of your household?" (A list of crimes was handed the respondent.)

	%
Oct. 1985 (Gallup)	18
July 1985 (Gallup)	17
Feb. 1985 (Associated Press/Media General)	22
Oct. 1984 (Gallup)	24
Sept. 1984 (Gallup)	35
Oct. 1983 (Gallup)	25
Oct. 1982 (Gallup)	25
Jan. 1982 (Gallup)	25
Oct. 1981 (Gallup)	23
Nov. 1979 (Gallup)	24
Oct. 1977 (Gallup)	20
Oct. 1975 (Gallup)	25
June 1975 (Gallup)	25
Oct. 1972 (Gallup)	21

Note: Sample sizes for all surveys approximate 1500.

Detailed Observation

When the incidence of crime is examined within a longer time frame, the percentage of Americans who have been victims increases sharply. For example, about one in five knows someone who was held up by an armed robber within the past two years. Also, one in four says at least one family member has been assaulted, and about one in five report being threatened at least once by someone with a gun.

TABLE #10-2

Q: "Do you know someone who has been held up by an armed robber in the past two years?"

	%
Yes	20
No	80

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc., April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

TABLE #10-3

Q: "Have you, yourself, or has anyone else in your immediate family ever been personally assaulted or mugged?"

	%
Yes, self	12
Yes, other family member(s)	14
Not assaulted	76

Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1528.

TABLE #10-4

Q: "Have you every been threatened with a gun, or shot at?"

	1984	1983	1980	1978	1976	1975	1973
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	20	20	21	20	17	17	16

Source: National Opinion Research Center, Feb.-April, national, (1973: n = 1504); (1975: n = 1490); (1976: n = 1499); (1978: n = 1532); (1980: n = 1468); (1983: n = 1599); (1984: n = 1473).

TABLE #10-5

Q: "Has being raped ever happened to you or to someone you know in your neighborhood?" (Asked only of women.)"

	Happened to you personally	Happened to someone you know
	%	%
Yes	3	12
No	97	85

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

TABLE #10-6

Q: "Has being murdered ever happened to anyone you personally know in your neighborhood? To a close relative?

	Someone in neighborhood	Close relative
	%	%
Yes	12	8
No	85	89
No opinion	3	3

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

Detailed Observation

Black Americans are more than twice as likely to be crime victims as whites.

TABLE #10-7

Q: "During the last year did anyone take something from you directly by using force--as in a stick-up, mugging or threat?"

	Whites	Blacks
	%	%
Yes	2	5
No	98	95

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, Feb. 1981, national (oversample of blacks), n = 1872; (whites: n = 1426; blacks: n = 446).

****

FINDING #11

WHILE THE PUBLIC'S FEAR OF CRIME IS BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, THE ACTUAL LEVEL OF CRIME AS MEASURED BY FBI STATISTICS SUGGESTS THAT THE PUBLIC'S FEARS ARE EXAGGERATED.

****

TABLE #11-1

	Frequently or Sometimes %	Rarely or Never %	1978 FBI Reports of Incidents %
Fear of being murdered	17	83	.009% of the population was murdered
Fear of being raped or sexually assaulted (Women Only; n = 540)	55	45	.06% of all women were raped
Fear of being robbed	23	77	.19% of the population was robbed
Fear of being beaten up	24	76	.26% of the population was assaulted

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

TABLE #11-2

Q: "I'll read a list of crimes which we often read or hear about. Please tell me if you are concerned or not concerned about each happening to you."

Q: Now, please tell me whether or not in the past five years, you personally, or any member of your family has been a victim of crime?"

	Concerned About It Happening	Happened in Last 5 Years To You or Family	
	%	%	%
"Someone breaking into your home and stealing your possessions"	61	16	28
"Someone robbing or mugging you on the street"	50	6	28
"Someone raping you or a family member"	62	6	--

Source: Associated Press/Media General, June 1984, national, n = 1243.

Detailed Observation

Even experts such as criminal justice professionals in the State of Michigan tend to overestimate the percentage of violent crime in their state.

TABLE #11-3

Q: "What is your estimate of the percentage of annually reported crime that is violent or person-related in Michigan?" *

Leaders' Estimate for 1985	Actual State Statistics for 1984
%	%
27	12

* Question wording reconstructed from the written report.

Source: Norris Cooperative for the Michigan Prison and Jail Overcrowding Project, June 1985, Michigan criminal justice leaders (state and local), n = 434.

****

FINDING #12

MANY AMERICANS TAKE NUMEROUS STEPS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST CRIME, AND ONE IN TEN REPORTS SOMETIMES CARRYING A GUN OR OTHER WEAPON FOR SELF-DEFENSE.

****

TABLE #12-1

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST CRIME

	Feb. 1985 %	June 1984 %	Jan.[1] 1981 %	Jan.[2] 1981 %	May 1980 %
"Lock the doors when you go out?"	--	--	--	84	87
"Avoid wearing expensive jewelry	--	--	64	--	60
"Protect your home by owning a gun?"	46[4]	40	31[4]	16	5[2]
"Have extra locks on the doors?"	--	--	--	13	51
"Avoid potentially dangerous areas?"	43[5]	--	60[5]	--	47
"Get someone to go with you when you go out after dark?"	54	64	--	20	34
"Have a dog for protection?"	--	--	44	20	--
"Carry a defensive device?					
- such as gun or other weapon	10	10	--	11	--
- mace, a whistle or alarm	17	--	--	7	--
"Carry a defensive device?"	--	--	--	17	--
"Have a burglar alarm?"	--	15	--	5	15

Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Sources: Gallup for Newsweek, national, Feb. 1985, n = 1009.
Associated Press/Media General, June 1984, national, n = 1243.
[1] Gallup for Newsweek, national, Jan. 1981 n = 1030.
[2] Gallup, national, Jan. 1981, n = 1540.
Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")
[3] Question wording: "Keep a gun or other weapon."
[4] Question wording: "Avoid certain areas even during the day."

TABLE #12-2

Q: "What have you personally done, if anything, to protect yourself from crime?"

	Yes	No	Don't Know
	%	%	%
"...Do you keep a gun at home?"	44	55	1
"...Have you started carrying a gun or other weapon?"	10	89	1

Source: Associated Press/Media General, June 1984, national, n = 1243.

TABLE #12-3

Q: "What type of (self-defense) device do you carry?" (Asked of those who carry a device for self defense, n = 17% of 1540. Gallup, national, Jan. 1981.)

(First and second responses combined.)

	%
Gun	30
Disabling spray	27
All other	43

Source: NBC News, February 1985, national, n = 1598.

****

FINDING #13

PEOPLE WHO OWN A GUN HAVE LESS FEAR OF CRIME THAN THOSE WHO DO NOT, SUGGESTING THAT OWNING A GUN PROVIDES A FEELING OF SECURITY. AND ONE-FOURTH OF THOSE WHO DO NOT OWN A FIREARM SOMETIMES CONSIDER BUYING ONE. HOWEVER, MOST AMERICANS SAY THEIR COMMUNITY WOULD BE MORE DANGEROUS IF MORE PEOPLE CARRIED GUNS.

****

TABLE #13-1

	GUN OWNERSHIP	
	Yes	No
	%	%
Concrete Fear Level[1]		
High	38	44
Moderate to Low	62	56
Formless Fear Level[2]		
High	30	44
Moderate to Low	70	56

1 Concrete fear is defined as the fear of being murdered, sexually assaulted or raped, mugged, knifed beaten up or being held up by an armed robber.

2 Formless fear is defined as how safe people feel being out alone during the day and at night in the central business district, main shopping center, in their neighborhood, or alone at home.

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

TABLE #13-2

Q: "Have you ever thought about buying a firearm to protect yourself from criminals?" (Asked of those who don't have firearms for protection, size of sub-sample not available.)

	%
Yes	28
No	71
No opinion	1

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1505.

TABLE #13-3

Q: "Would you say the chances are high or low that you will make a purchase (of a firearm to protect yourself from criminals) someday?" (Asked of those who don't have firearms for protection, size of sub-sample not available.)

	%
High	18
Low	79
In the middle (vol.)	1
No opinion	2

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1505.

TABLE #13-4

Q: "If most people carried guns, do you think the streets would be safer or more dangerous?"

	%
More Dangerous	78
Safer	11
No Difference	3
Don't Know	8

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, Feb. 1985, national, n = 1009.

****

FINDING #14

AMERICANS WANT THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT TO REDUCE CRIME AND WANT THE GOVERNMENT TO SPEND MORE TO DO SO.

****

TABLE #14-1

Q: "There are many problems facing our nation today. But at certain times some things are more important than others, and need more attention from our Federal Government than others. I'd like to know for each of the things on this list whether you think it is something the government should be making a major effort on now, or something not needing any particular government effort now."

"...Trying to solve the problems of crime and drugs."

	June 1983 %	June 1982 %	May 1981 %	June 1980 %	June 1979 %	June 1978 %
A major effort	80	79	80	77	78	78
Some effort	17	17	17	19	18	17
Needs no particular effort now	2	3	3	3	3	3
Don't know	1	1	1	1	1	1

Source: Roper, national (June 1983: n = 2000); (June 1982: n = 2000); (May 1981: n = 2003); (June 1980: n = 2006); (June 1979: n = 2006); (June 1978: n = 2002)

TABLE # 14-2

Q: "Turning now to the business of the country--we are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount..."

"...Halting the rising crime rate"

	Spend Too Little	Spend About Right	Spend Too Much	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%
1985[1]	63	28	5	4
1984[1]	68	25	5	3
1983[1]	67	24	5	4
1983[2]	64	25	4	6
1982[1]	72	19	5	5
1982[2]	68	23	4	5
1981[2]	72	19	3	6
1980[1]	69	21	6	4
1980[2]	73	17	5	6
1979[2]	66	21	4	7
1978[1]	64	25	6	4
1978[2]	65	21	6	7
1977[1]	66	22	6	4
1976[1]	66	21	5	5
1975[1]	66	23	5	4
1974[1]	67	23	5	3
1973[1]	65	25	5	4

[1] Source: National Opinion Research Center, Feb.-April, national, (1985: n = 751); (1984: n = 484); (1983: n = 1599); (1982: n = 1506); (1980: n = 1468); (1978: n = 1532); (1977: n = 1530); (1976: n = 1499); (1975: n = 1490); (1974: n = 1484); (1973: n = 1504).

[2] Source: Roper, national, Dec. (1978: n = 1997); (1979: n = 2003); (1980: n = 2000); (1981: n = 2000); (1982: n = 2000); (1983: n = 2000)

TABLE #14-3

Q: "For each thing that I mention, please tell me in which of the three categories of importance you would place the problem. The three categories are: A. One of the two or three most important problems you would like to see the government concentrate on during the next several years. B. An important problem which the government should continue to work on, but not one of the two or three most important problems. C. Or, that you either don't see it as a problem, or that you don't think it is a problem the government ought to be involved with."

"...Reducing crime through more Federal support for police, the courts, and prisons."

	%
2-3 most important	38
Important	46
Not important	14
Don't know/Refused	3

Source: Gordon Black for USA Today, Nov. 1984, national, n = 879.

TABLE #14-4

Q: "Our nation is faced with many ways to spend the tax money that the government collects. I'm going to mention some of these ways. For each one, I'd like you to tell me if the government should spend more money, less money, or about the same amount of money as it is spending now."

"...Reducing crime?"

	Nov. 1984	July 1983*
	%	%
More	62	71
Same	33	23
Less	4	5

* Question wording: "I'm going to mention several general categories on which the federal government spends money. After each, please tell me whether you feel spending for it should be increased, decreased, or left about the same...Crime?"

Source: Gordon Black for USA Today, Nov. 1984, national, n = 879.

ABC News/Washington Post, July 1983, national, n = 1505.

TABLE #14-5

Q: "On another matter, I am going to mention several general categories on which the government spends money. Please tell me whether you feel spending for it should be increased, decreased or left about the same? Is that increase/decrease a great deal or somewhat?"

"...Fighting Crime."

	Nov. 1984		July 1983*	
	%	%	%	%
Increased great deal	48	> 75	47	> 74
Increased somewhat	27		27	
Decreased somewhat	1	> 3	4	> 6
Decreased great deal	2		2	
Left about the same	19		18	
No opinion	2		2	

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464; ABC News/Washington Post, Feb. 1981, national, n = 1205.

Detailed Observation

However, people do have other priorities for tax dollars. Law enforcement ranked behind the schools, healthcare, welfare, and defense in terms of people's priorities for federal tax dollars.

TABLE #14-6

Q: "If and when more federal money from Washington is available, which one of the areas on this card do you think should be given first consideration when these funds are distributed? And which one of these areas do you think should be given second consideration? And which one of these areas do you think should be given third consideration?"

(First, second, and third responses combined.)

	%
Public school education	55
Health care	53
Welfare and aid to poor	42
Military defense	33
Law enforcement	32
Public housing	27
Pollution/Conservation	18
Agricultural aid	13
Mass transit	9
Highway improvement	7
Foreign aid	3
No opinion	8

Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Gallup for Phi Delta Kappa and Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis, May 1982, national, n = 1557.

Detailed Observation

Moreover, slightly more than half of the public doubts whether allocating more money to the crime would have a significant impact.

TABLE #14-7

Q: "I want to ask you about a number of problems we face. For each one, would you tell me which of these statements best expresses your views about the problem?"

"...the high crime rate in the nation."

(Asked of half the sample.)

	%
"If we put enough money and resources into solving this problem we would go a long way towards ending it."	40
OR	
"More money wouldn't help this problem very much because it's caused by things that money doesn't have much effect on."	54
Don't know	6

Source: Roper, April 1981, national, n = 1999.

SECTION II:

PERCEIVED CAUSES OF CRIME

****

FINDING #15

IN THE EARLY 1980s, THE PUBLIC SAID THAT ECONOMIC FACTORS SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY WERE MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR INCREASED CRIME. DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE, THE BREAKDOWN OF FAMILIES AND MORAL VALUES, AND A JUDICIAL SYSTEM THAT IS TOO LENIENT WERE EACH CITED BY ABOUT ONE IN SEVEN.

****

TABLE #15-1

Q: "What is most responsible for increased crime rates?"

	Dec. 1982 %	Nov. 1981 %	Jan. 1981 %	Nov. 1979 %
"Unemployment poverty and the like"	58	--	--	--
-"Unemployment/lack of jobs"	--	11	37	20
-"Economic situation/inflation"	--	9	--	13
-"Lack of money"	--	3	--	6
Drugs/alcohol	18	10	13	12
"Breakdown of family, society, moral values"	15	--	19	--
-Decline of respect/morals	--	5	--	7
-Mothers working/children unsupervised	--	1	--	3
-Lack of spiritual training	--	1	--	3
Judicial/court system - too lenient/liberal	12	8	20	25
-Punishment not severe enough	6	--	13	--
TV/movie violence/pornography	5	1	3	3
Police are inadequate or negligent	2	6	--	8
Racial problems	1	--	--	--
All other	15	2	--	--

Sources: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.
Gallup, national (Nov. 1981: n = 1540); (Nov. 1979: n = 1541).
Gallup, for Newsweek, Jan. 1981, national, n = 1030.

****

FINDING #16

HOWEVER, PEOPLE SAY DIFFERENT FACTORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR TEENAGE VIOLENCE AND CRIME. LACK OF PARENTAL DISCIPLINE AND DRUG ABUSE ARE SEEN AS THE LEADING CAUSES, WHILE ECONOMIC FACTORS ARE SAID TO BE OF SLIGHTLY LESS IMPORTANCE.

****

TABLE #16-1

Q: "What would you say is most responsible for this increase in violent behavior among teenagers?" (Asked of those who said violent behavior among American teenagers is a growing problem, 81% of total sample).

	%
Parents don't discipline children enough	23
Drugs	19
Unemployment, poverty and the like	17
Breakdown of family, society, moral values	12
Violence on TV entertainment shows and in movies	7
Courts too lenient	5
Crimes are not punished severely enough	3
Psychological problems/'growing pains'	3
Public schools ineffective/not doing a good job	2
Fewer people attend church/people not as religious	1
Racial Problems	*
Not enough police/police not effective	*
No opinion	6

* less than .5 percent

Source: ABC News, Feb. 1983, national, n = 505.

****

FINDING #17

LARGE NUMBERS OF AMERICANS FEEL THAT TV NEWS GIVES TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO CRIME, AND THAT TV NEWS INCREASES FEAR ABOUT CRIME AMONG THE PUBLIC. YET PEOPLE ALSO SAY THAT THE NEWS PAYS ATTENTION TO CRIME STORIES BECAUSE THEY ARE WHAT PEOPLE WANT TO SEE.

****

TABLE #17-1

Q: "Now, do you feel there is too much attention given to stories about crime, too little, or about the right amount of attention given to reporting crime?..."

	Too Much	Too Little	Right Amount	Not Sure
	%	%	%	%
"...In the media generally."	41	9	49	1
"...On the network evening news."	33	9	55	3
"...On your local TV news program."	31	9	57	3
"...In your local newspaper."	30	12	55	3

Source: Harris, June 1984, national, n = 1251.

TABLE #17-2

Q: "I'm going to read a list of some general topics and after I read each please tell me whether you think network television news broadcasts give the topic too much attention, not enough attention or just the right amount of attention."

"...Crime and violence."

	1984	1983	1982	1981
	%	%	%	%
Too much attention	45	53	51	44
Not enough attention	20	17	20	27
The right amount of attention	34	26	27	28
No opinion	1	3	3	1

Source: ABC News, national, (June 1984: n = 1005); (Feb. 1983: n = 505); (Dec. 1982: n = 2464); (Oct. 1981: n = 1004).

TABLE #17-3

Q: "Do you feel this country is..."	1981 %	1978 %	1975* %
"Not violent by nature, but violence is played up too much by the media?"	65	77	77

Source: Harris, national, (March 1981: n = 1001); (Sept. 1978: n = 1201); (1975: sample size approximates other years).

Detailed Observation

More than 8 in 10 say that TV news has made Americans more fearful of crime than they used to be. But most citizens also say that TV news reports stories about crime because they are what people want to see.

TABLE #17-4

Q: "I am going to mention some things people sometimes say about TV news programs. Please tell me whether you tend to agree or disagree with each. TV news stories about violence have made Americans more fearful than they were in the days before there was television."

	%
Agree	84
Disagree	14
Don't Know	2

Source: ABC News, Feb. 1983, national, n = 505.

TABLE #17-5

Q: "Now, I am going to mention some things people sometimes say about TV news programs. Please tell me whether you tend to agree or disagree with each."

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know %
"TV news runs lots of crime stories because that's what people are interested in"	61	36	2

Source: ABC News, Feb. 1983, national, n = 505.

****

FINDING #18

SOLID MAJORITIES OPPOSE THE AMOUNT AND TYPE OF VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION DRAMAS.

****

Detailed Observation

Close to 3 in 4 say that violence on television programs is excessive and inappropriate, a trend stable since 1977.

TABLE #18-1

Q: "How do you feel about the amount of violence portrayed on television programs today, not including news programs? Do you think there is too much violence, a reasonable amount, or very little violence?"

	1984 %	1977 %	1968 %
Too much violence	71	71	59
A reasonable amount	23	24	32
Very little violence	3	3	4
Not sure	3	2	5

Source: Harris, national, (June 1981: n = 1251); (Summer 1977 & 1968: sample size approximates 1500.

TABLE #18-2

Q: "Apart from the amount of violence, do you generally approve or disapprove of the kind of violence that is portrayed on TV?"

	1984 %	1977 %	1968 %
Approve	17	23	25
Disapprove	78	71	63
Not sure	5	6	12

Source: Harris, June 1984, national, n = 1251.

****

FINDING #19

AMERICANS ARE DIVIDED ABOUT WHETHER STRICTER CONTROL OF GUNS WOULD PREVENT VIOLENT CRIME, AND HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY SPLIT ON THE ISSUE OF GUN CONTROL.

****

TABLE #19-1

Q: "In your opinion, if the laws on handguns were stricter than they are..."

	A Great Deal	Quite A Lot	Not Very Much	Not At All	No Opinion
	%	%	%	%	%
"...Would this reduce the number of people killed by guns in a family argument?"	26	28	25	18	3
"...Would this reduce the number of accidental deaths caused by guns?"	26	27	26	17	4
"...Would this reduce the number of crimes?"	17	24	31	25	3

Source: Gallup, May 1983, national, n = 1534.

TABLE #19-2

Q: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Stricter gun control laws would help reduce the number of murders in this country.'"

	%
Agree	50
Disagree	47
Not sure	3

Source: NBC News/Associated Press, April 1981, national, n = 1604.

TABLE #19-3

Q: "Do you think there should or should not be a law which would forbid the possession of handguns except by the police and other authorized person?"

	Should	Should Not	Don't Know
	%	%	%
April 1985 (Gallup)[1]	40	56	4
June 1984 (Associated Press/ Media General)[2]	37	54	9
May 1983 (Gallup)1	44	48	8
Sept. 1982 (Gallup)	45	55	0
July 1982 (Roper)[3]	34	61	5
April 1982 (Gallup)	41	54	5
June 1981 (Gallup)	41	54	5
April 1981 (Gallup)	39	58	3
Nov. 1979 (Gallup)[4]	31	65	4
Dec. 1976 (Roper)[3]	36	59	5
Nov. 1975 (Harris)[5]	37	57	6
March 1975 (Gallup)[4]	41	55	4

1 Question Wording: "Some communities have passed laws banning the sale and possession of handguns. Would you favor or oppose having such a law in this city/community?"

2 Question Wording: "Please tell me whether you personally favor or oppose the following as measures to reduce the crime rate: 'Make it illegal to buy handguns.'"

3 Question Wording: "Would you be for or against a law preventing civilians from owing hand guns?"

4 Question Wording: "pistols and revolvers" instead of "handguns".

5 Question Wording: "Would you favor or oppose a federal law that banned the ownership of all handguns by private citizens?"

Note: All surveys had sample sizes of approximately 1500.

Detailed Observation

Almost half of the public oppose a ban on citizen ownership of guns of any type; a quarter feel that only handguns should be banned. One in five believe all guns should be banned.

TABLE #19-4

Q: "There are differing opinions about whether there should be laws against selling guns in this country. Some people would like to outlaw the sale of all guns, others would just like to outlaw the sale of handguns and pistols, but not rifles or shotguns, and still others do not want to outlaw the sale of any types of guns. How do you feel--are you in favor of banning the sale of all guns, or just hand guns, or don't you favor banning the sale of any type of gun?

	April 1981	Jan. 1981	Aug. 1977	Sept. /Oct. 1975	Aug. 1975
	%	%	%	%	%
Ban all guns	18	23	19	21	20
Ban hand guns only	28	25	27	27	31
Don't favor banning any type	50	46	47	46	44
Don't know	4	6	6	6	6

Source: Roper, national, (April 1981: n = 1998); (Jan. 1981: n = 2000); (Aug. 1977: n = 2005); (Sept.-Oct. 1975: n = 2007); (Aug. 1981: n = 2016).

Detailed Observation

Almost half the public says that the reason that handgun laws should be stricter is that they can be obtained too easily; another third cite the amount of crime and violence as justification. The leading reason why people would make handgun laws less strict is the right to protection. Most believe that stricter handgun laws would reduce the number of people killed by guns in family arguments and accidents, but not the overall number of crimes.

TABLE #19-5

Q: "(Asked of those who wanted handgun laws made more/less strict, 63% of total sample.) "Why do you feel this way?"

Reasons Laws Should be More Strict:

	%
Guns too easy to obtain	48
Too much crime/violence	34
Too many accidents	7
Unnecessary to have guns	6
Against guns	3
Guns kill	2

Reasons Laws Should be Less Strict:

Want gun for protection	34
Constitutional right to bear arms	18
Stricter laws would be ineffective	13
Want gun for hunting	10
Favor other gun laws-registration, etc.	4
Guns don't kill, people do	3
No opinion	3

Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Gallup, May 1983, national, n = 1534.

Detailed Observation

A majority of people say they do not have all the information they need about the issue of gun control. Nevertheless, less than a quarter say they are likely to change their minds on the issue.

TABLE #19-6

Q: "How much information do you have about the gun control issue? Do you have all the information you need, most of the information, some information, or very little information?"

	%	%
All the information I need	14	
		> 36
Most of the information I need	22	
Some information I need	40	
		> 63
Very little information I need	23	
Don't know	1	

Source: National Opinion Research Center, February - April 1984, national, n = 484.

TABLE #19-7

Q: "How firm are you about your opinion on gun control -- would you say you are very likely to change your opinion, somewhat likely to change, somewhat unlikely to change, or very unlikely to change?"

	%	%
Very likely to change	2	
		> 19
Somewhat likely to change	17	
Somewhat unlikely to change	26	
		> 78
Very unlikely to change	52	
Don't know	2	

Source: National Opinion Research Center, February - April 1984, national, n = 484.

SECTION III:

VIEWS ABOUT THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

****

FINDING #20

ONLY ABOUT ONE AMERICAN IN SEVEN NOW HAS A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM. PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THE SYSTEM NEITHER DISCOURAGES CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR NOR TREATS ALL PEOPLE EQUALLY.

****

TABLE #20-1

Q: "Now, taking some specific aspects of our life, we'd like to know how confident you feel about them. First, do you feel very confident, only fairly confident, or not at all confident that..."

"...we can on the whole depend on the justice of our legal system?"

	Oct. 1983	Sept. 1982	Sept. 1979	Sept-Oct. 1976	Sept-Oct. 1975	Sept-Oct. 1974	Sept-Oct. 1973
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very Confident	13	12	16	20	16	21	16
Only Fairly Confident	47	50	51	48	48	46	48
Not at All Confident	37	35	29	28	31	28	28
Don't Know	3	3	4	5	5	6	8

Source: Roper, national, sample sizes for all surveys approximate 2000.

Detailed Observation

Since 1974, near majorities have said the criminal justice system needs many improvements or a fundamental overhaul.

TABLE #20-2

Q: "Which of the descriptions on the card do you feel best applies to our system of administering justice?"

	Feb. 1983		Feb. 1981		Feb. 1977		Feb. 1974	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
"...Basically sound and essentially good?"	9		9		7		9	
		> 50		> 48		> 46		> 51
"...Basically sound but needs some improvement?"	41		39		39		41	
"...Not too sound, needs many improvements?"	35		32		36		31	
		> 48		> 49		> 52		> 45
"...Basically unsound, needs fundamental overhauling?"	13		17		16		14	

Source: Roper, national (Feb. 1983: n = 2000); (Feb. 1981: n = 2005); (Feb. 1977: n = 2004); (June 1974: n = 1987).

Detailed Observation

Additionally, since the 1960s, the number of Americans who say the criminal justice system does not discourage criminal behavior has steadily increased.

TABLE #20-3

Q: "From what you know or have heard, do you feel that our system of law enforcement works to really discourage people from committing crimes, or don't you feel it discourages them much?"

	1982 %	1981 %	1977* %	1975* %	1973* %	1970* %	1967* %
Really discourages	16	16	16	20	18	18	26
Does not discourage them much	79	79	67	67	64	67	56
Encourages them (vol.)	2	2	8	4	4	4	4
Not sure	3	3	9	9	9	11	12

Source: Harris, national, (May 1982: n = 1249); (Jan. 1981: n = 1250); (all subsequent years: n approximates 1500).

Detailed Observation

Americans views about equality and the law are in apparent conflict. On the one hand, majorities say that the system mainly favors the rich (though not necessarily whites); but a solid majority also says they would get a "fair trail" if they were accused of a crime.

TABLE #20-4

Q: "Which of these two statements do you tend to agree with more: 'The justice system in the U.S. mainly favors the rich,' or, 'The justice system in the U.S. treats all Americans as equally as possible.'"

	%
Mainly favors the rich	57
Treats all Americans equally	39
Neither (vol..)/Don't know	4

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, June 1985, national, n = 1506.

TABLE #20-5

Q: As I read off each of these statements would you tell me whether you agree or disagree with it?..."

"A poor person is more likely than a person of average or above average income to receive the death penalty for the same crime."

	%
Agree	64
Disagree	31
No opinion	5

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1523.

TABLE #20-6

Q: "A black person is more likely than a white person to receive the death penalty for the same crime?"

	%
Agree	39
Disagree	53
No opinion	8

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1523.

TABLE #20-7

Q: "If you were a defendant in a court case, how likely or unlikely do you think it would be that you would get a fair trial?...Extremely likely, very likely, fairly likely, fairly unlikely, very unlikely, extremely unlikely."

	%		%
Extremely likely	14		
Very likely	34	>	83
Fairly likely	35		
Fairly unlikely	6		
Very unlikely	3	>	11
Extremely unlikely	2		
No opinion	6		

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, July 1983, national, n = 1207.

Detailed Observation

Majorities also say "there is too much concern with equality and too little with law and order."

TABLE #20-8

Q: "A number of controversial proposals are being discussed these days. I'd like you to tell me for each one whether you strongly agree with it, partially agree with it, or disagree with it..."

"...There is too much concern with equality and too little with law and order."

	1981	1976
	%	%
Strongly agree	48	49
Partially agree	31	32
Strongly disagree	18	18
Don't know	3	--

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for Time, national, (May 1981: registered voters, n = 1221); (Jan. 1976: n = 951).

****

FINDING #21

THE PUBLIC EXPRESSES A FAIR DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE AND THE SUPREME COURT, BUT LESS CONFIDENCE IN LOCAL JUDICIAL SYSTEMS AND THE PRISONS. IMPORTANTLY, THE PUBLIC'S CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE INCREASES AS A RESULT OF DIRECT CONTACT; LOCAL POLICE ARE MORE HIGHLY RATED THAN STATE OR FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS. BUT PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE JUDICIARY IS GREATEST AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, AND DECREASES AS CONTACT OR ACCESS INCREASES; STATE AND LOCAL JUDICIAL SYSTEMS ARE RATED LESS HIGHLY THAN THE FEDERAL SYSTEM.

****

TABLE #21-1

Q: "I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Would you tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one--a great deal, quite a lot, some or very little?"

"How much confidence do you, yourself, have in... -- a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little?"

	Great Deal %	Quite A Lot %	Some %	Very Little %
The Church or organized religion	41	29	22	16
The police in your community	26	29	24	19
Banks and banking	25	29	32	12
The Military	25	27	32	12
The U.S. Supreme Court	21	26	35	14
The public schools	19	20	34	25
Charitable organizations	17	19	43	19
Newspapers	14	20	41	23
Television	11	14	41	33

Source: CBS News/New York Times, Aug. 1981, national, n = 1433.

Detailed Observation

In the 1960s, the public expressed roughly equal confidence in law enforcement officials at the federal, state and local level. But since that time, a different trend has developed, and by 1983, the public had considerably more confidence in local officers than in state officers, and more confidence in state than federal officials.

TABLE #21-2

Q: "How would you rate the job done by law enforcement officials on these different levels--excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?"

	1982 %	1981 %	1977* %	1975* %	1973* %	1970* %	1967* %
Local Level:							
Excellent/Pretty good	62	62	52	57	58	64	64
Fair/Poor	37	37	46	40	39	53	30
State Level:							
Excellent/Pretty good	56	57	47	51	51	63	62
Fair/Poor	40	38	42	39	40	30	24
Federal Level:							
Excellent/Pretty good	47	48	39	44	42	60	58
Fair/Poor	46	45	49	44	47	30	23

Source: Harris, national, (May 1982: n = 1249); (Jan. 1981: n = 1250); (1977 - 1967: n = approximately 1250).

Detailed Observation

In 1978, the public expressed less confidence in the courts to the extent that they came into contact or had direct access to them; the Supreme Court was rated highest, federal courts second, and state and local courts were rated lowest of the three. Also, of all the components of the system, the prisons were rated lowest by the public. Finally, public confidence in the system, especially in the judiciary, was markedly lower than the confidence expressed by a sample of judges and lawyers.

TABLE #21-3

Q: "Now I'd like to talk to you about your confidence in different institutions in American society. How confident do you feel about each institution?"

Extremely/Very Confident	General Public %	Lawyers % (Rank)	Judges % (Rank)
Medical profession	50	44 (4)	50 (4)*
Organized religion	41	32 (6)	39 (7)
Local police	40	30 (7)	50 (4)*
American business	39	36 (5)	47 (6)
Public schools	37	20 (8)	33 (8)
U.S. Supreme Court	36	61 (2)	67 (1)
Federal courts	29	63 (1)	60 (3)
Media	29	17 (11)	17 (13)
Federal government	27	18 (10)	28 (10)
State and local courts	23	45 (3)	63 (2)
Congress	23	14 (12)	24 (11)
Organized labor	23	4 (15)	15 (14)
State and local government	21	19 (9)	31 (9)
State legislatures	21	10 (13)	20 (12)
State prison systems	17	8 (14)	11 (15)

* Tie in rank

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for the National Center for State Courts, March 1978, national, (general public: n = 1931); (lawyers: n = 317); (state & local judges: n = 194).

****

FINDING #22

MOST CITIZENS SAID THAT THEY WOULD GIVE UP CERTAIN CIVIL LIBERTIES IF IT WOULD GREATLY REDUCE CRIME. A MAJORITY FAVORS CHANGING THE LAW SO THAT EVIDENCE, EVEN IF ACQUIRED ILLEGALLY, COULD BE USED IN COURT. HOWEVER, MAJORITIES OPPOSE GIVING THE POLICE GREATER POWERS TO WIRETAP OR SEARCH A HOME WITHOUT A WARRANT.

****

TABLE #22-1

Q: "Would you be willing to give up a few of the freedoms we have in this country if it meant we could greatly reduce the amount of crime and violence?"

	%
Yes would be willing	65
No would NOT be willing	25
Don't know	10

Source: ABC News, June 1983, national, n = 504.

TABLE #22-2

Q: "The law now says that judges must throw out evidence which police obtain illegally. Would you favor a change so that more of this evidence can be admitted, or do you think the law should be kept as it is?"

	%
Change to admit more evidence	53
Keep law as it is	41
Not sure	6

Source: NBC News/Associated Press, Jan. 1982, national, n = 1597.

Detailed Observation

In general, the public's willingness to give up civil liberties in order to reduce crime diminishes when people consider the trade off in terms of specific liberties. For example, solid majorities oppose giving the police the ability to search a home without a warrent or to wiretap telephones.

TABLE #22-3

Q: "At their trials, do you think suspected criminals should have the right to refuse to answer questions if they feel their answers may be used against them?

	%
Yes	46
No	45
Don't know	9

Source: New York Times, June 1983, national, n = 1145.

TABLE #22-4

Q: "Do you approve or disapprove of these alternatives for dealing with crime?"

	Approve %	Disapprove %	Don't Know %
"Allowing the police to stop and search anybody on suspicion."	48	50	2
"Allowing the police to wiretap the telephone of anyone they suspect."	30	67	3
"Allowing the police to search a home without a warrant.."	13	86	1

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, Jan. 1981, national, n = 1030.

****

FINDING #23

WHILE A MAJORITY OF ABOUT 2 TO 1 SAYS THAT VIGILANTISM IS A SERIOUS THREAT TO SOCIETY, MAJORITIES ALSO FEEL THAT "TAKING THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN HANDS" IS SOMETIMES JUSTIFIED.

****

TABLE #23-1

Q: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?"

	Agree	Disagree
	%	%
"While it's tempting to give muggers some of their own medicine by having citizens shoot some of them, it is wrong to have people take the law into their own hands, shooting and punishing people they think are criminals."	63	31

Source: Harris, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1254.

TABLE #23-2

Q: "Do you believe that people who become the victims of muggings or holdups have a right to take matters into their own hands, or should they let police and the courts deal with the matter?"

	%
Take matters into their own hands	42
Let police and courts deal with matter	47
Don't know	11

Source: Associated Press/Media General, Feb. 1985, national, n = 1532.

TABLE #23-3

Q: "Do you feel that taking the law into one's own hands, often called vigilantism, is justified by circumstances?"

	Feb. 1985 %	Jan. 1985 %
Always	3	8
Sometimes	68	72
Never	23	17
Don't know	6	3

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, Feb. 1985, national, n = 1009
Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1528.

Detailed Observation

The public had mixed reactions to the Goetz case. About half support his actions, but a substantial minority believe his actions were unjustified.

TABLE #23-4

Q: "Now let me ask you about the case of Bernhard Goetz, the New York subway rider who shot four young people who had approached him in an attempt to get money from him. Let me read you some statements about the Goetz case. For each, tell me if you agree or disagree..."

	Agree %	Disagree %
"It is detestable the way criminals can molest riders on subways and other public transportation and consistently get away with it."	87	12
"Maybe if someone like Goetz shot some muggers like he did every week, the criminals would get the idea it was not worth it any more."	57	40
"When Goetz said that he used dum-dum bullets, that he was sorry he didn't gouge out the eyes of the four he shot, and that if he could have reloaded fast enough, he would have taken out after them he looks more like a 'Death Wish' gunman out stalking to kill criminals, not an innocent victim trying to defend himself."	54	38

Source: Harris, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1254.

TABLE #23-5

Q: "From what you know about the case (of Bernhard Goetz, who shot four youths on a New York subway) do you feel Goetz shot the youths more out of fear for his own life at the moment, or more to get revenge for past muggings and failings of the justice system?" (Asked of those who have heard or read about the Goetz case, 87% of total sample.)

	%
More out of fear for his life	53
More to get revenge	29
Don't know	18

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, Feb. 1985, national, n = 1009.

TABLE #23-6

Q: "From what you've read and seen about this case (of Bernhard Goetz), if you had to choose one or the other, would you say that Goetz was more an innocent victim defending himself, or was he more a person waiting for his chance to get revenge against muggers?"

	%
More an innocent victim	55
More waiting for a chance for revenge	31
Neither (vol..)	2
Not sure	12

Source: Harris, April 1985, national, n = 1254.

****

FINDING #24

THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC SAYS THEIR OPINIONS ARE UNLIKELY TO CHANGE ABOUT ISSUES RELATED TO CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE.

****

TABLE #24-1

Q: "How firm are you about your opinion on law enforcement--would you say you are very unlikely to change your opinion, somewhat likely to change, somewhat unlikely to change, or very unlikely to change?"

	%		%
Very likely to change	3		
		>	32
Somewhat likely to change	29		
Somewhat unlikely to change	32		
		>	67
Very unlikely to change	35		
Don't know	2		2

Source: National Opinion Research Center, Feb. - April 1984, national, n = 989.

SECTION IV:

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE POLICE

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FINDING #25

SOLID MAJORITIES OF AMERICANS EXPRESS CONSIDERABLE RESPECT FOR THEIR LOCAL POLICE AND SEE THEM AS HONEST, ETHICAL, RESPECTFUL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.

****

TABLE #25-1

Q: "In general, how much respect do you have for individual policemen who are on your local police force. Do you have great respect, have considerable respect, have some respect, have little respect, have no respect."

	%
Have great or considerable respect	74
Have some respect	19
Have little or no respect	5
No opinion	2

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, April 1983, national, (sample size not available).

TABLE #25-2

Q: "How would you rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields--very high, high, average, low or very low? ...Policemen?"

	1985	1983	1981	1981	1977
	%	%	%	%	%
High	47	41	52	44	37
Average	41	45	37	41	50
Low	10	11	9	12	12
Don't know	2	3	2	2	1

Source: Gallup, national, (July 1985, n = 1536); (May 1983, n = 1534); (July 1981, n = 1564); (Aug. 1977, n = 1507).
Gallup for Newsweek, national, April 1981: n = 706.

TABLE #25-3

Q: "We'd like to know how widespread you think certain questionable practices are -- Policemen taking payoffs from lawbreakers. Do you think it is true of most, fairly many, not too many, or very few policemen?"

	1982		1979		1978		1976	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
True of most	12		7		9		9	
		> 35		> 30		> 31		> 32
True of fairly many	23		23		22		23	
True of not too many	39		39		36		36	
		> 60		> 63		> 60		61
True of very few	21		24		24		25	
Don't know	6		7		10		8	

Source: Roper, national, (March 1982: n = 2000); (March 1979: n = 2004); (March 1978: n = 2003); (March 1976: n = 2002).

TABLE #25-4

Q: "Which of the following best describes your local police officers?"

	%
"Respectful"	89
"Arrogant."	11

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

****

FINDING #26

WHILE MAJORITIES CONSISTENTLY GIVE HIGH RATINGS TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR LOCAL POLICE, THE PUBLIC IS DIVIDED IN ITS CONFIDENCE THAT THE POLICE CAN PROTECT THEM FROM VIOLENT CRIME. PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF CRIME EXPRESS LOWER LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE.

****

Detailed Observation

In 1984, nearly 7 out of 10 people rated the performance of their local police as "excellent" or "good." Yet a near majority expressed little or no confidence in the ability of the police to protect them from violent crime.

TABLE #26-1

Q: "In every community, the schools, the newspapers, the television stations, the local government, each has a different job to do. Would you say that the police are doing an excellent, good, fair, or poor job?"

	Excellent or Good	Fair or Poor	Don't Know
	%	%	%
Dec. 1984 (Roper)	69	28	3
Jan. 1983 (Roper)	61	37	2
Dec. 1982 (Roper)	65	31	4
Nov. 1980 (Roper)	62	33	5
Nov. 1978 (Roper)	66	29	5
Nov. 1976 (Roper)	65	29	6

NOTE: Sample sizes for all surveys approximate 2000 except for the Audits & Surveys survey whose sample size was unavailable.

TABLE #26-2

Q: "How much confidence do you have in the ability of the police to protect you from violent crime?"

	1985		1981	
	%	%	%	%
A great deal	15		15	
		> 52		> 49
Quite a bit	37		34	
Not very much	39		42	
		> 45		> 50
None at all	6		8	
Don't know	3		1	

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, national, Feb. 1985: n = 1009); (Jan 1981: n = 1030).

Detailed Observation

A 1985 survey showed that more than half of those with direct experience were dissatisfied with the police response.

TABLE #26-3

Q: "Were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the police response when you or a member of your family have been a victim of crime?" (Asked only of those whose family included a crime a victim, 22% of the total sample, where n = 1532.)

	%
Satisfied	39
Dissatisfied	56
Don't know/No answer	5

Source: Associated Press/Media General, Feb. 1985, national, n = 1532.

****

FINDING #27

PEOPLE GENERALLY BELIEVE THERE ARE FEW INCIDENTS OF POLICE BRUTALITY, EVEN IN BLACK COMMUNITIES. BUT BLACKS ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO SAY THE POLICE ARE BRUTAL THAN WHITES.

****

TABLE #27-1

	Agree	Disagree
	%	%
"The local police just enjoy pushing people around and giving them a hard time."	15	85

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

Detailed Observation

While a large minority is concerned about the threat of police brutality, only 12 percent say the police use too much force. However, black Americans are far more likely to say the police are frequently brutal or use too much force.

TABLE #27-2

Q: "Do you think police brutality is a very serious threat these days to citizens like yourself, a moderately serious threat, not much of a threat, or no threat at all?"

	%
Very serious	19
Moderately serious	26
Not much of a threat	37
No threat	13
Don't know	4

Source: Roper, Jan. 1984, national, n = 2000.

TABLE #27-3

Q: "Do the police use too much force?"

	%
Yes	12
No	88

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

TABLE #27-4

Q: "Do you think there is any police brutality in the area where you live?" (Asked only of black respondents.)

	%
Yes, a great deal	10
Yes, a fair amount	16
Yes, only a little	18
No	50
Don't know	6

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, May 1980, national (blacks only), n = 525.

Detailed Observation

Americans of different races have markedly different views about how the police treat black Americans. Most whites say the police treat all citizens equally, but most blacks say the police treat black Americans less fairly than they treat whites.

TABLE #27-5

Q: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The local police treat people of all races the same."

	%
Agree	76
Disagree	24

Source: Research & Forecasts, Inc. for A-T-O, Inc. April-May 1980, national, n = 1047. (Source Document: "The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime: America Afraid.")

TABLE #27-6

Q: "Do you agree or disagree with this statement: These days police in most cities treat blacks as fairly as they treat whites."

	Whites	Blacks
	%	%
Agree	56	31
Disagree	33	60
Don't know/No opinion	11	9

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, Feb. 1981, national (blacks were oversampled), total: n = 1972 (whites: n = 1426, blacks: n = 446).

****

FINDING #28

ALTHOUGH SOLID MAJORITIES ACCEPT THAT THE POLICE NEED TO USE FORCE UNDER SOME CIRCUMSTANCES, MOST AMERICANS SAY THE POLICE SHOULD NOT USE FORCE TO SOMEONE USING VULGAR OR OBSCENE LANGUAGE OR WHEN A SUSPECT IS BEING QUESTIONED.

****

TABLE #28-1

Q: "Are there situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen?"

		1984	1983	1980	1978	1976	1975	1973
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Yes	69	78	73	76	76	73	73
	No	28	20	24	20	20	23	25
"If the citizen was attacking the policeman with fists?"								
	Yes	92	92	94	93	94	98	97
	No	6	7	5	6	5	1	3
"If the citizen was attempting to escape from custody?"								
	Yes	87	86	78	75	76	75	73
	No	12	11	18	22	20	21	23
"If the citizen had said vulgar and obscene things to the police?"								
	Yes	12	14	15	18	20	19	22
	No	86	83	84	80	77	77	76
"If the citizen was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case?"								
	Yes	8	9	8	8	8	8	8
	No	89	89	90	89	90	90	91

Source: National Opinion Research Center, Feb.-April, national, (1973: n = 1504); (1974: n = 1484); (1975: n = 1490); (1976: n = 1499); (1977: n = 1530); (1978: n = 1532); (1980: n = 1468); (1982: n = 1506); (1983: n = 1473).

****

FINDING #29

THE PUBLIC IS UNCERTAIN ABOUT SOME PROPOSALS TO INCREASE POLICE EFFECTIVENESS. ROUGHLY EQUAL NUMBERS SAY MORE POLICE SHOULD PATROL IN SQUAD CARS AND ON FOOT. ONE IN THREE SAYS EFFECTIVENESS WOULD BE INCREASED IF POLICE WERE ETHNICALLY OR RACIALLY MATCHED TO THE NEIGHBORHOODS THEY PATROL. BUT SOLID MAJORITIES OPPOSE GOVERNMENTAL SUBCONTRACTING OF THE POLICE TO PRIVATE COMPANIES.

****

TABLE #29-1

Q: "Which of these two statements comes closest to your views: 'There should be more police on foot patrol in my community and less of them driving around in squad cars,' or 'There should be fewer police on foot patrol in my community and more of them driving around in squad cars'."

	%
Should be more police on foot patrol	44
Should be more police in squad cars	51
No opinion	5

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

TABLE #29-2

Q: "Do you think that assigning policemen with the same ethnic and racial backgrounds as the neighborhoods they protect is more effective, equally effective or less effective than assigning policemen at random with no regard to their ethnic or racial backgrounds?"

	%
More effective	36
Equally effective	46
Less effective	6
No opinion	12

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, April 1983, national, (sample size not available).

TABLE #29-3

Q: "All levels of government are frequently criticized for being both too big and too inefficient. One possible solution to this is to have a much smaller government that contracts with private companies to provide personnel and services just as the government now contracts with private companies to manufacture the products and machines it uses -- cars, tanks, ships, business machines, etc. I'm going to name some different services, and for each one would you tell me if you think it would be a good idea or a bad idea to have the government subcontract it to private companies?

"...The hiring for and running of police departments."

	%
Good idea	23
Bad idea	70
Don't know	7

Source: Roper, March 1982, national, n = 2000.

****

FINDING #30

THE PUBLIC STRONGLY FAVORS INCREASING THE NUMBERS OF POLICE TO REDUCE CRIME. A MAJORITY FAVORS HIRING MORE POLICE, EVEN WHEN IT MEANS RAISING TAXES.

****

TABLE #30-1

Q: "Please tell me whether you personally favor or oppose hiring more police as a measure to reduce the crime rate?"

	%
Favor	75
Oppose	19
Don't know	6

Source: Associated Press/Media General, June 1984, national, n = 1243.

TABLE #30-2

Q: "Do you think we should move have more police even if it means higher taxes, or hold taxes down even if it means no more police?"

	1983	1980	1978	1975
	%	%	%	%
More police and higher taxes	54	51	34	50
No more police and holding down taxes	23	49	34	25
Stay where we are (vol.)	19	--	24	16
Don't know	4	--	5	8

Source: Roper, national, n = about 2000 for all surveys.

SECTION V:

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE COURTS

****

FINDING #31

SINCE THE MID-1970S, ONE AMERICAN IN FOUR HAS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT "THE WAY THE COURTS ARE RUN" AS ONE OF THE TOP FIVE CONCERNS. OVER THE PAST DECADE, MORE THAN HALF HAVE CONSISTENTLY SAID THAT "PERMISSIVENESS IN THE COURTS" IS A MAJOR CAUSE OF PROBLEMS IN THE COUNTRY.

****

TABLE #31-1

Q: "Here is a list of things people have told us they are concerned about today. Would you read over that list and then tell me which 2 or 3 you personally are most concerned about today?" (First, second and third responses combined.)

	Jan. 1983	Jan. 1982	Jan. 1981	Jan. 1979	Jan. 1977	Jan. 1975	July 1974
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A recession and rising unemployment	50	34	24	20	19	33	13
Inflation and high prices	46	53	56	63	48	58	57
Crime and lawlessness	33	37	35	31	40	34	36
The way the courts are run	27	25	24	23	27	22	26
Money enough to live right and pay the bills	27	29	31	33	28	30	31
Our relations with foreign countries	17	21	19	15	9	10	8
Wrongdoing by elected officals	17	17	18	24	22	26	34
The fuel and energy crisis	13	17	30	25	31	27	25
The way young people think/act	11	12	14	14	17	14	14
Pollution of air and water	8	7	10	10	13	11	14
Alcoholism	6	7	7	6	7	--	--
None or don't know	*	0	0	0	1	0	1

* = less than .5 percent
Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Roper, national, (Jan. 1983: n = 2000); (Jan. 1982: n = 2000); (Jan. 1981 n = 2000); (Jan. 1979: n = 2003); (Jan. 1977: n = 2006); (Jan. 1975: n = 2000); (July 1974 n = 1980).

Detailed Observation

At least half the American people attribute the country's problems to permissiveness in the courts. This view has held consistent since 1975.

TABLE #31-2

Q: "Here is a list of possible causes of some of our problems in this country. Would you call off the ones you think are the major causes of our problems today?"

	Sept 1983 %	Feb 1979 %	Feb 1977 %	Sept /Oct 1975 %	Sept /Oct 1974 %	Sept /Oct 1973 %
A letdown in moral values	54	56	57	53	53	50
Permissiveness in the courts	51	51	50	51	47	39
Too much commitment to other nations in the world	49	49	38	52	54	48
Wrongdoing in government	48	51	47	56	64	51
Selfishness, people not thinking of others	47	50	52	46	47	51
Permissiveness of parents	44	42	47	43	40	43
Too much emphasis on money and materialism	41	41	42	36	40	--
Lack of good leadership	40	52	34	54	57	49
Radical attempts to force change	15	19	19	26	21	19
Too much technology	9	9	9	8	8	6
Growing conservatism	8	7	5	6	7	6
Too little interest in other nations in the world	8	7	6	5	5	6
None or don't know	2	2	2	2	3	3

Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Roper, national, (Sept. 1983: n = 2000); (Feb. 1979: n = 2004); (Feb. 1977 n = 2004); (Sept.-Oct. 1975: n = 2007); (Sept.-Oct. 1974: n = 1988); (Sept.-Oct. 1973: n = 1263).

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FINDING #32

FEWER THAN ONE AMERICAN IN THREE HAS A "GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE" IN THE U.S. SUPREME COURT, AND MAJORITIES OF AMERICANS INCLUDING COMMUNITY LEADER, JUDGES AND ATTORNEYS BELIEVE THAT THE STATE AND LOCAL COURT SYSTEM IS IN NEED OF REFORM.

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TABLE #32-1

Q: "As far as people in charge of running the Supreme Court are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence or hardly any confidence at all in them?"

	A Great Deal of Confidence
	%
1985 (Harris)	28
1984 (Harris)	35
1983 (Harris)	33
1982 (Harris)	25
1981 (Harris)	29
1980 (ABC News/Harris)	27
1979 (ABC News/Harris)	28
1978 (Harris)	29
1977 (Harris)	29
1976 (Harris)	22
1975 (Harris)	28
1974 (Harris)	40
1973 (Harris)	33
1972 (Harris)	28
1971 (Harris)	23

Note: Sample sizes for all Harris surveys approximated 1250.

TABLE #32-2

Q: "How much confidence do you have in the U.S. Supreme Court -- a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little?"

	1985	1983	1981	1981	1981	1979	1978
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A great deal	18	14	18	23	21	18	17
	> 56	> 42	> 46	> 51	> 47	> 55	> 45
Quite a lot	38	28	28	28	26	27	28
Some	30	34	32	29	35	31	29
Very little	9	16	13	16	14	19	16
None	1	1	4	NA	NA	1	2
Don't know	5	7	4	4	4	4	8

Sources: Gallup, national, (May 1985: n = 1528); (Aug. 1983: n = 1497); (Nov. 1981: n = 1508); (April 1979: n = 1509); (Jan. 1977: n = 1500).
ABC News/Washington Post, Sept. 1981, national, n = 1501.
CBS News/New York Times, June 1981, national, n = 1433.

Detailed Observation

In 1982, only one in five said that the U.S. Supreme Court had "too much power that should belong to the President and the Congress." And, since an additional 44 percent did not have an opinion, this issue seems to be of low salience or interest to most Americans.

TABLE #32-3

Q: "Some people think the Supreme Court has taken too much power that should belong to the President and Congress. Other people think the Supreme Court has been carrying out its proper responsibilities under our system of government. Do you think the Supreme Court has taken too much power, or is it carrying out its proper responsibilities, or don't you know enough about this to have an opinion?"

	%
Supreme Court has too much power	17
Supreme Court has carried out its proper responsibilities	39
Don't know enough about the issue	28
No opinion	16

Source: CBS News/New York Times, March 1982, national, n = 1545.

Detailed Observation

IN 1978, A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS SAID THAT THE STATE AND LOCAL COURTS SYSTEM IS IN NEED OF REFORM. COMMUNITY LEADERS, JUDGES AND ATTORNEYS ALSO EXPRESSED THIS VIEW.

TABLE #32-4

Q: "Using the scale on this card, please tell me how much you think state and local court systems in (state where interview took place) needs to be reformed, if at all?"

State/Local Courts Are In:	General Public %	%	Community Leaders %	%	Judges %	%	Lawyers %	%
Great need of reform	23		36		11		19	
Moderate need of reform	25	> 81	35	> 91	29	> 67	32	> 78
Some need of reform	33		20		27		27	
Slight need of reform	8		5		24		17	
No need of reform	3	> 11	3	> 8	7	> 31	5	> 22
Uncertain	8		1		2		-	

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for the National Center for State Courts, March 1978, national, (general public: n = 1931); (lawyers: n = 317); (state & local judges: n = 194); (community leaders: n = 278).

****

FINDING #33

IN 1980, ABOUT ONE THIRD OF THE PUBLIC EXPRESSED LITTLE OR NO CONFIDENCE IN THE COURTS' ABILITY TO SERVE THE PUBLIC'S NEEDS. INEFFECTIVENESS AT REDUCING CRIME, HIGH COSTS, LENIENCY IN GRANTING BAIL AND LONG WAITS FOR TRIAL WERE SEEN AS SERIOUS PROBLEMS THAT FREQUENTLY OCCUR. HOWEVER, MOST OF THE JUDGES AND ATTORNEYS INTERVIEWED DID NOT SEE THESE AS MAJOR PROBLEMS.

****

TABLE #33-1

Q: "How much confidence do you have in the courts to serve the public's needs?"

	%
Great deal	19
Fair amount	47
Very little	29
None (volunteered)	5

Source: Gallup, May 1980, national, n = 1582.

TABLE #33-2

Q: "Which of the following are serious problems that frequently occur?"

Serious problems that often occur[1]	General Public %	(Rank)	Community Leaders %	(Rank)	Judges %	(Rank)	Lawyers %	(Rank)
Courts do not help decrease the amount of crime	43	(1)	40	(1)	13	(2)	28	(1)
Courts are expensive for the people who must use them	39	(2)	33	(2)	15	(1)	27	(2)
Courts grant bail to those previously convicted of a serious crime	37	(3)	23	(4)	9	(4)	23	(4)
Courts in which more than six months pass from arrest to trial	36	(4)	30	(3)	10	(3)	12	(3)
Court decisions are influenced by political considerations	26	(5)	6	(7)	2	(7)	3	(7)
Courts do not treat the poor as well as the affluent	25	(6)	18	(5)	3	(5) *	10	(5)
Courts do not treat blacks as well as they treat whites	19	(7)	15	(6)	3	(5) *	9	(6)
Courts disregard defendant's rights	9	(8)	2	(8)	--	(-)	2	(8)

[1] Percentages represent the highest point on a scale (i.e., "a serious problem that occurs often") created by merging items about the seriousness of the problem and the frequency with which it is felt to occur.

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for the National Center for State Courts, March 1978, national, (general public: n = 1931); (lawyers: n = 317); (state & local judges: n = 194); (community leaders: n = 278).

Detailed Observation

IN 1981, SEVEN AMERICANS OUT OF TEN SAID THEY HAD LITTLE OR NO CONFIDENCE IN THE COURTS TO SENTENCE AND CONVICT CRIMINALS.

TABLE #33-3

Q: "How much confidence do you have in the courts to sentence and convict criminals?"

	%		%
A great deal	5		
		>	28
Quite a bit	23		
Not very much	59		
		>	70
None at all	11		
Don't know	2		

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, Jan. 1981, national, n = 1030.

****

FINDING #34

SINCE 1967, INCREASING MAJORITIES HAVE FAVORED STIFFER SENTENCES FOR CONVICTED OFFENDERS AND ALSO SAY THAT THE COURTS ARE TOO LENIENT.

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Detailed Observation

In 1967, less than half the public felt that the courts were "too easy in dealing with criminals." But in the 1980s, 91 percent favored "stiffer sentences" for convicted criminals, and eighty percent said that sentences for violent crime were "too lenient."

TABLE #34-1

Q: "Please tell me whether you personally favor or oppose the following as measures to reduce the crime rate. ... Stiffer sentences for criminals."

	%
Favor	91
Oppose	5
Don't know	4

Source: Associated Press/Media General, June 1984, national, n = 1243.

TABLE #34-2

Q: "Generally, do you feel that courts have been too easy in dealing with criminals, too severe, or do you think they have treated criminals fairly?"

	1982	1981	1977	1975	1973	1970	1967
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Too easy	81	83	74	69	65	64	49
Too severe	1	14	1	2	2	3	1
Fair	14	1	12	17	17	19	15
It varies (vol)	2	2	9	9	13	9	29
Not sure	2	--	4	3	3	5	6

Source: Harris, national, (May 1982: n = 1249); (Jan. 1981: n = 1250); (for all subsequent years n is approximately 1500).

TABLE #34-3

Q: "In general, do you believe that judges in the U.S. are too hard, too soft, or are just right in the sentences that they give to convicted criminals."

	%
Too hard	2
Too soft	74
Just about right	15
No opinion	9

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, Feb. 1982, national, (sample size not available).

TABLE #34-4

Q: "In general, do you think the courts deal too harshly, or not harshly enough with criminals, or don't you have enough information about the courts to say?"

	1982	1974
	%	%
Too harshly	4	6
Not harshly enough	76	60
About right (vol.)	5	6
Not enough information	14	29

Source: National Opinion Research Center, national, Feb.-April, (1982: N = 759); (1974: N = 731).

TABLE #34-5

Q: "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Too few criminals are sent to prison.'"*

	%
Agree	75

* Question wording reconstructed from the written report.
Source: Norris Cooperative for the Michigan Prison and Jail Overcrowding Project, June 1985, State of Michigan residents, n = 820.

****

FINDING #35

AMERICANS ARE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED THAT CRIMES OF VIOLENCE, CHILD ABUSE, AND CRIMES INVOLVING FIREARMS BE SEVERELY PUNISHED.

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TABLE #35-1

Q: "Do you think that the sentences given people convicted of violent crimes such as murder, rape, and armed robbery are far too lenient, a little too lenient, about right, a little too harsh, far too harsh?"

	%
Far too lenient	59
A little too lenient	27
About right	8
A little too harsh	2
Far too harsh	1
No opinion	3

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, May 1983, national, n = 1205.

Detailed Observation

More than forty percent of the American public believe that child abusers should get at least 20 years or the death penalty, and about 4 in 5 says rapists should receive a sentence of at least 20 years. In 1981, over half said that a criminal who carries a gun when committing a crime should have 5-10 years added to his sentence.

TABLE #35-2

Q: "What is the appropriate punishment for sexual abuse of a child?

	%
Death penalty	10
More than 20 years in jail	33
More than 5 years in jail	22
Six months to 5 years in jail	13
Probation	2
Punishment not appropriate	8
Not sure	12

Source: Los Angeles Times, July 1985, national, n = 2627.

TABLE #35-3

Q: "In general, which one of the following sentences should be given to a person convicted of rape...death sentence, life sentence, 20 years or more but less than life, under 20 years?"

	%
Death sentence	13
Life sentence	31
20 years or more, but less than life	40
Under 20 years	9
No opinion	7

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, May 1983, national, n = 1205.

TABLE #35-4

Q: "Leaving aside those cases in which there is a murder, how do you feel a criminal who carries a gun when committing a crime should be sentenced?"

	%
Life in prison	15
5 to 10 years added to sentence	51
Sentence should be the same as with no gun	20
Depends on circumstances	8
Don't know	6

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, Jan. 1981, national, n = 1030.

****

FINDING #36

SINCE THE EARLY 1980s LARGE MAJORITIES OF AMERICANS HAVE FAVORED THE USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY FOR MURDER. SUPPORT FOR THE DEATH PENALTY HAS INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY SINCE 1965.

****

TABLE #36-1

Death Penalty for Murder[1]

	Favor	Oppose	Not Sure
	%	%	%
Nov. 1985 (Gallup)	75	17	8
July 1985 (YS&W)*	75	20	5
Feb.-April 1985 (NORC)**	76	19	5
Jan. 1985 (Gallup)	72	28	0
Feb.-April 1984 (NORC)**	70	24	6
Feb.-April 1983 (NORC)**	73	22	5
Jan. 1983 (Harris)	68	27	5
Dec. 1982 (ABC News)	76	19	8
Dec. 1982 (YS&W)*	73	22	6
Nov. 1982 (ABC News)	79	21	0
Sept. 1982 (Gallup)	72	28	0
Feb.-April 1982 (NORC)**	74	21	6
May 1981 (ABC News)	73	20	8
Jan. 1981 (Gallup)	66	25	9
Feb.-April 1980 (NORC)**	67	27	6
Nov. 1979 (NBC News)	65	27	8
Nov. 1978 (NBC News)	66	25	9
Feb.-April 1978 (NORC)**	66	28	6
March 1978 (Gallup)	62	27	11
Dec. 1977 (Harris)	67	25	8
Feb.-April 1977 (NORC)**	67	26	6
April 1976 (Gallup)	65	28	7
Feb.-April 1976 (NORC)**	66	30	5
Feb.-April 1975 (NORC)**	60	33	7
Feb.-April 1974 (NORC)**	63	32	5
Feb.-April 1974 (Harris)	59	31	10
Feb.-April 1973 (NORC)**	60	35	5
Feb.-April 1972 (NORC)**	53	39	8
Feb.-April 1970 (Harris)	47	42	11
Feb.-April 1969 (Harris)	48	38	14
Feb.-April 1965 (Harris)	38	47	15

* Yankelovich, Skelly & White, Inc.

** National Opinion Research Center

1 All surveys were national with sample sizes averaging 1500. (Note the exception below.)

2 This national sample consisted of persons exiting voting booths, n = 24,438.

Detailed Observation

Support for the death penalty varies greatly depending the circumstances of the murder. Fewer than half of Americans would support the death penalty for rape, hijacking, or treason.

TABLE #36-2

Q: "Opinions differ as to whether there should be a death penalty for certain very serious crimes, or whether there should not be a death penalty for any crime, no matter how serious it is. (If favor death penalty) -- For which of these crimes, if any would you favor the death penalty?"

Those favoring death penalty for:	Nov. 1985 %	Jan. 1981 %	March 1980 %	March 1978 %	Aug. 1977 %	March 1976 %	March/ April 1974 %
Premeditated murder	--	--	67	--	--	59	60
Kidnapping when the victim is killed	--	--	63	--	--	57	62
Attempting to assassinate the President	57	--	--	--	--	--	--
A paid killing	--	--	64	--	--	56	58
The killing of a policeman or a prison guard	--	--	58	--	--	52	54
Hijacking a plane that results in death	--	--	55	--	--	50	55
Assassinating a high public official	--	--	56	--	--	50	53
Armed robbery that results in death	--	--	59	--	--	50	51
Blowing up a government building that results in death	--	--	56	--	--	49	53
Rape	45	37	--	32	48	--	--
Arson that results in death	--	--	55	--	--	48	50
Hijacking a plane	45	22	--	--	--	--	--
Treason, espionage	48*	39	37	36	--	34	37

*Wording: "Spying for a foreign nation during peacetime"

Nov. 1985: Gallup, national, n = 1008
Jan. 1981: Gallup, national, n = 1609
Mar. 1980: Roper, national, n = 2002
Mar. 1978: Gallup, national, n = 1560
Aug. 1977: Roper, national, n = 2005
Mar. 1976: Roper, national, n = 2002
Mar./Apr. 1974: Roper, national, n=2002

****

FINDING #37

AMERICANS ARE SPLIT OVER WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE A MANDATORY DEATH PENALTY FOR MURDER.

****

TABLE #37-1

Q: "This card lists various proposals being discussed in this country today. Would you tell me whether you generally favor or generally oppose each of these proposals."

"...A mandatory death penalty for anyone convicted of murder."

	%
Favors	56
Opposes	41
Not sure	3

Source: Gallup, Dec. 1981, national, n = 1483.

TABLE #37-2

Q: "There are various proposals being discussed in ~~this~~ country today. Would you tell me whether you generally favor or generally oppose each of these proposals.

"...A mandatory death penalty for anyone convicted of murder."

	%
Generally favor	56
Generally oppose	44

Source: Gallup, Sept. 1980, national, n = 1602.

TABLE #37-3

Q: "Do you feel that all persons convicted of killing a policeman or prison guard/first degree murder should get the death penalty, that no one convicted of killing a policeman or prison guard/first degree murder should get the death penalty, or do you feel that whether or not someone convicted of killing a policeman or prison guard/first degree murder gets the death penalty should depend on circumstances of the case and the character of the person?"

	Convicted of Killing a Policeman/ Prison Guard	Convicted of First Degree Murder
	%	%
All cases should get the death penalty	31	27
No one should get the death penalty	11	11
It should depend on the circumstances	56	60
Not sure	2	2

Source: Harris and Associates, Jan. 1983, national, n = 1254.

****

FINDING #38

ALMOST TWO-THIRDS OF AMERICANS BELIEVE THE DEATH PENALTY IS A DETERRENT.

****

TABLE #38-1

Death Penalty as a Deterrent to Crime/Murder[1]

Typical Question: "Do you believe that capital punishment--the death penalty--is or is not a deterrent to crime?"

	Jan. 1985	Jan. 1983	Dec. 1982	Oct. 1981	Dec. 1977
	%	%	%	%	%
Is a deterrent	62	63	68	63	59
Is not a deterrent	31	32	27	29	34
Not sure	7	5	5	81	7

[1] Since responses to questions worded "a deterrent to crime" did not differ significantly from those worded "a deterrent to murder," they were combined.

Sources:
- Jan. 1985: Gallup, national, n = 1523
- Jan. 1983: Harris, national, n = 1254
- Dec. 1982: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for Time, national (registered voters), n = 1019.
- Oct. 1981: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, national, n = 1200.
- Dec. 1977: Harris, national, n = 1259

Detailed Observation

Most of those who favor the death penalty say they would still do so even if it were proven that it does not deter murder. Similarly, most of those who oppose the death penalty say they would still oppose it even if it were proven that it does deter murder.

TABLE #38-2

Q: "Suppose new evidence showed that the death penalty does not act as a deterrent to murder--that it does not lower the murder rate. Would you favor or oppose the death penalty (for murder)?"

(Asked of those who favor the death penalty for murder, 72% of total sample).

	%
Still favor death penalty even if it doesn't deter murder	71
Now oppose death penalty because it doesn't deter murder	21
No opinion	8

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1523.

TABLE #38-3

Q: "Suppose new evidence showed that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to murder--that it lowers the murder rate. Would you favor or oppose the death penalty (for murder)?"

(Asked of those who opposed the death penalty for murder, 20% of total sample).

	%
Would favor death penalty if it deterred murder	18
Would still oppose the death penalty	57
No opinion	15

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1523.

****

FINDING #39

A SLIGHT MAJORITY FAVORS THE DEATH PENALTY OVER LIFE IMPRISONMENT WITH ABSOLUTELY NO CHANCE OF PAROLE.

****

TABLE #39-1

Q: "What do you think should be the penalty for murder--death or life imprisonment, with absolutely no possibility of parole?"

	%
Death penalty	56
Life imprisonment	34
Neither (vol.)	4
No opinion	6

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1523.

TABLE #39-2

Q: "Would you still continue to favor the death penalty if instead there was wider use of life imprisonment with no chance of parole?"

(Asked of those who favor wider use of the death penalty, 73% of total sample.)

	%
Yes, would continue to favor death penalty	63
No, would not	32
Not sure (vol.)	6

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for Time, Dec. 1982, national (registered voters), n = 1019.

TABLE #39-3

Q: "Suppose it could be proven to your satisfaction that the death penalty was not more effective than long prison sentences in keeping people from committing crimes such as murder. Would you be in favor of the death penalty or opposed to it?"

	Jan. 1983	Dec. 1977	Dec. 1973
	%	%	%
Favor	52	46	35
Oppose	43	40	48
Not sure	5	14	17

Source: Harris and Associates, national, (Jan. 1983: n = 1254); (Dec. 1977: n = 1259); (Dec. 1973: sample size approximates other years.)

****

FINDING #40

LARGE MAJORITIES OF AMERICANS FAVOR PERMITTING JUDGES TO DENY BAIL TO POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS PERSONS, ABOLISHING THE INSANITY PLEA, AND RESTRICTING THE USE OF PLEA BARGAINING.

****

TABLE #40-1

Q: "Do you personally favor or oppose the following?"

	Favor	Oppose	Don't Know
	%	%	%
"...Permit judges to deny bail to persons where there is reasonable evidence they are a danger to the community."	91	7	2
"...Allow verdicts of 'guilty but mentally ill,' to prevent release of many who are now judged not guilty because of insanity."	71	19	9

Source: Roper, Sept. 1981, national, n = 2000.

TABLE #40-2

Q: Do you think that the plea of insanity in criminal trials should or should not be abolished?

	1982	1981
	%	%
Should be abolished	66	69
Should not be abolished	24	20
No opinion	10	11

* Question wording: "When people are put on trial for murder, do you think the courts should continue to allow them to plead "not guilty by reason of insanity," or do you think the rules should be changed so that people charged with murder cannot use an 'insanity' defense?"

Source: Audits & Surveys for Merit, July 1982, national, (sample size not available.)
NBC News/Associated Press, Sept. 1981, national, n = 1601.

Detailed Observation

Most people favor restricting the use of plea bargaining to less serious cases but reject its complete abolishment.

TABLE #40-3

Q: "Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements concerning lawyers and the legal system?"

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know %
"...Plea bargaining should be restricted to only the less serious cases."	72	19	9
"...Plea bargaining should be abolished altogether"	33	57	10

Source: Gordon Black for USA Today, June 1984, national, n = 1262.

****

FINDING #41

AMERICANS FAVOR SPECIAL COURTS FOR JUVENILES, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE SPLIT OVER WHETHER JUVENILES SHOULD BE TRIED PRIVATELY AND RECEIVE LIGHTER SENTENCES. THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FOR JUVENILES' RIGHT TO TRIAL BY JURY.

****

TABLE #41-1

Q: "Do you think juveniles who are age 13 years old who are accused of committing a violent crime..."

	Jury %	Judge %	No Opinion %
"... Should be tried by a jury, as adults are, or be tried by a judge only?"	68	28	4

	Lighter Sentences %	Same Sentences %	No Opinion %
"... Should be given lighter prison sentences than adults, or the same sentences?"	45	44	11

	Tried Publically %	Tried Privately %	No Opinion %
"...Should be tried with the public and the press present, or should reporters and the public be kept our of their trials?"	43	50	7

	Same Court %	Juvenile Court %	No Opinion %
"...Should be tried in the same court as adult offender, or in juvenile court?"	32	61	7

Source: CBS News/New York Times June 1981, national, n = 1467.

****

FINDING #42

THERE IS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR SENTENCING JUVENILES TO SPECIAL FACILITIES.

****

TABLE #42-1

Q: "Do you think juveniles who are age 13 years old who are accused of committing a violent crime..."

	Same Prison %	Juvenile Prison %	No Opinion %
"...Should go to the same prison as adults, or to separate prisons?"	6	93	1

Source: CBS News/New York Times June 1981, national, n = 1467.

****

FINDING #43

THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL MINORITY SUPPORT FOR HOLDING OFFENDERS 15 AND UNDER LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CRIMES THEY COMMIT. HOWEVER, MOST BELIEVE ONLY THOSE 16 AND OVER SHOULD BE TRIED AND SENTENCED AS ADULTS FOR VIOLENT CRIMES.

****

Detailed Observation

More than a quarter of the public say that teenagers who are 16 years or older should be held legally responsible for the crimes they commit; another quarter believe that 13 should be the age of legal responsibility. However, a 1981 question about violent crime found half the public believed sixteen and eighteen year-olds should be tried and punished as adults, while only 1 in 25 believed this age should be thirteen.

TABLE #43-1

Q: "What is the youngest age that teenagers should be held legally responsible for any crimes they commit? At age...13, 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18?"

	%	
18 years	19	
17 years	5	
16 years	27	
15 years	12	
14 years	8	>43
13 years	23	

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, July 1983, national, n = 1207.

TABLE #43-2

Q: "At what age do you think children who commit violent crimes should be tried and punished as adults?"

	%	
18 years	25	
17 years	5	> 55
16 years	25	
15 years	10	
14 years	8	
13 years	4	
12 or less than 12	5	
Older than 18	3	
Children should always be tried as adults	5	
Other/It depends	3	
No Opinion	7	

Source: CBS News/New York Times, June 1981, national, n = 1467.

****

FINDING #44

IN 1978, FOUR AMERICANS IN TEN SAID THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH JUDGES TO HANDLE THE WORKLOAD, THE HIGHEST RANKED PROBLEM ABOUT THE JUDICIARY AND A RATING NEARLY IDENTICAL TO LEADERS' ASSESSMENT. IN ADDITION, NEARLY THREE AMERICANS IN FOUR FAVORS APPOINTING A GREATER NUMBER OF JUDGES.

****

TABLE #44-1

Q: "Here are some problems that may or may not exist in this state. Please tell me if each is a serious problem that frequently occurs in the state."

	General Public %	Community Leaders %	Judges %	Lawyers %
A Serious Problem That Occurs Often: Relating to Judges:				
Not enough judges to handle the work	39	41	28	36
Judges who do not put in a full day's work	19	13	5	10
Judges who show little interest in people's problems	15	7	1	5
Judges who are biased and unfair	12	5	--	3
Judges who insist on following the letter of the law	11	3	1	2
Judges who have inadequate training or education	7	9	3	7

1 Percentages represent the highest rating on a scale (i.e., "a serious problem that occurs often") created by merging views about the seriousness of a problem and the perceived frequency with which it occurs.

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for the National Center for State Courts, March 1978, national, (general public: n = 1931); (lawyers: n = 317); (state & local judges: n = 194); (community leaders: n = 278).

Detailed Observation

In 1982, three-quarters of the public felt that appointing more judges to reduce the time between arrest and trial to a maximum of 2 months was "a good idea."

TABLE #44-2

Q: "I am going to read you some proposals that have been made to improve prisons and to reduce crime. Please tell me whether you think the proposal is a good idea or a poor idea?" "...Appoint more judges in order to reduce the time between arrest and trial to a maximum of 2 (two) months."

	%
Good idea	74
Poor idea	18
No opinion	8

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1982, national, n = 1511.

Detailed Observation

Large majorities also say that a reason for court overcrowding is that lawyers are too anxious to sue.

TABLE #44-3

Q: "Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements concerning lawyers and the legal system?"

	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
	%	%	%
Lawyers are too anxious to sue, needlessly crowding the court system	71	20	0

Source: Gordon Black for USA Today, Feb. 1984, national, n = 1388.

****

FINDING #45

ABOUT ONE AMERICAN FOUR SAYS THE COURTS HAVE TOO MUCH POWER OR INFLUENCE. BUT COMPARED TO INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS BUSINESS, LABOR, THE PRESS, THE PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE HOLDING THIS VIEW ABOUT THE COURTS IS QUITE LOW.

****

TABLE #45-1

Q: "There is talk from time to time about how much power or influence various groups in our society have. Here is a list of some of the different groups. Read down that list and call off those groups, if any, you think have too much power and influence in our society today?"

	Have Too Much Power and Influence				
	Sept 1983 %	Sept 1982 %	Sept 1979 %	Sept /Oct 1974 %	Sept /Oct 1973 %
The wealthy	--	63	58	--	--
Big business	59	52	53	68	66
Labor unions	56	39	51	58	55
The Arab oil nations	--	46	66	--	--
The press	41	41	39	36	31
Organized crime	--	36	53	--	--
Government depts. & bureaus	--	31	34	--	--
The executive branch of government	30	--	--	41	45
Congress	28	--	--	23	17
The judiciary/the courts	**27**	**21**	**22**	**25**	**23**
Civil rights groups	23	--	--	27	28
Religious leaders	20	--	--	8	9
The CIA & the FBI	--	19	25	--	--
State governments	--	18	20	--	--
The military	--	14	--	--	--

Sources: Roper, national, (Sept 1983: n = 2000); (Sept 1982: n = 2000); (Sept 1979: n = 2009); (Sept-Oct 1974: n = 1998); (Sept-Oct 1973: n = 1263).

****

FINDING #46

MOST BLACK AMERICANS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT BLACKS RECEIVE THE SAME TREATMENT AS WHITES IN THE COURTS, BUT WHITES DO NOT SHARE THIS VIEW. HOWEVER, NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF ALL AMERICANS SAY THE POOR ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY LIKELY TO RECEIVE THE DEATH SENTENCE.

****

TABLE #46-1

Q: "Do you think blacks and whites usually receive equal justice in the courts in the area where you live?" (BLACK RESPONDENTS ONLY.)

	%
Yes	31
No	54
Don't know	15

Source: Gallup for Newsweek, May 1980, national (Blacks only), n = 525.

TABLE #46-2

"A black person is more likely than a white person to receive the death penalty for the same crime." (RANDOM SAMPLE INCLUDING BLACKS AND WHITES)

	%
Agree	39
Disagree	53
No opinion	8

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1523.

TABLE #46-3

"A poor person is more likely than a person of average or above average income to receive the death penalty for the same crime."

	%
Agree	64
Disagree	31
No opinion	5

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1985, national, n = 1523.

****

FINDING #47

BY A MARGIN OF MORE THAN TEN TO ONE AND IN SPITE OF ALL THE CHANGES IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM THAT THEY WOULD SUPPORT, AMERICANS SAY "MOST TRIALS" SHOULD BE CONDUCTED BEFORE A JURY RATHER THAN SIMPLY BEFORE A JUDGE.

****

TABLE 47-1

Q: "Do you generally favor the jury system, or do you think most trials should be conducted by a judge without a jury?"

	%
Favor jury system	82
Favor trial by judge without jury	7
Don't know/No answer	11

Source: Associated Press/Media General, June 1984, national, n = 1243.

****

FINDING #47

MAJORITIES FAVOR A VARIETY OF REFORMS SUCH AS ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE TO REVIEW JUDGES PERFORMANCE, AND CREATING ALTERNATIVES TO COURT FOR HANDLING DIVORCE CASES.

****

TABLE #47-1

Q: "In recent years, several suggestions have been advanced for changing the court system. I would like you to read through this list, and indicate the degree to which you support each suggestion."

	Strong/Moderate Support %
Hot line for answering legal questions	80
Establish committee to review judges' performance	76
Establish committee to screen potential candidates for judgeships	61
Seek alternatives to court for handling divorce cases	58
Night and weekend court operations	51
Legislature should set exact sentences for particular crimes	44
Establish alternatives to resolving neighborhood disputes	43
Allow police to issue citations for misdemeanors	38
Legal insurance	33

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for the National Center for State Courts, March 1978, national, n = 1931.

****

FINDING #48

NINE AMERICANS OUT OF TEN SAY PAROLE BOARDS SHOULD BE STRICTER, AND OVER SIX IN TEN WOULD FAVOR ELIMINATING PAROLE ALTOGETHER.

****

TABLE #48-1

Q: "Various proposals have been made as possible solutions to the increased crime rate. Tell me whether you personally favor or oppose the following as measures to reduce the crime rate." "...Tougher parole boards."

	%
Favor	91
Oppose	4
Don't know	5

Source: Associated Press/Media General, June 1984, national, n = 1243.

TABLE #48-2

Q: "Do you think convicted murderers who do not receive the death penalty should or should not be eligible for parole -- that is serve less than their full sentence?"

	%
Should be eligible	9
Should not be eligible for parole	85
No opinion	6

Source: Audits & Surveys for the Merit Report, May 1983, national, n = 1205.

TABLE #48-3

Q: "For each of the following, tell me whether you personally favor or oppose it? 'Eliminate parole for federal prisoners, so they must serve the entire sentence imposed.'"

	%
Favor	61
Oppose	30
Don't know	9

Source: Roper, Sept. 1981, national, n = 2000.

SECTION VI:

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PRISON SYSTEM

****

FINDING #49

AMERICANS' VIEWS ABOUT THE MAIN GOAL OF PRISONS SEEM TO BE INFLUENCED (TO AN UNUSUAL EXTENT) BY THE PRECISE WORDING OF DIFFERENT SURVEY QUESTIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN TWO NATIONAL SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN 1982, THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAID THE PRIMARY GOAL OR PURPOSE OF PRISONS IS REHABILITATION VARIED FROM 15 TO 44 PERCENT, RESPONDING TO SLIGHT DIFFERENCES IN QUESTION WORDING.

****

TABLE #49-1

Q: "What do you feel is the main purpose of sending people who have committed a crime to prison?

	1982	1982	1981
	%	%	%
To get violent criminals off the streets	41	38	35
To punish offenders, teach them a lesson	19	21	22
To rehabilitate the morals and skills of criminals	15	30	35
To act as a deterrent to crime	20	--	--
Not sure/don't know	6	11	8

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for Time, June 1982, national, (registered voters), n = 1010.
Harris, national, (May 1982: n = 1249); (Jan. 1981: n = 1250).

TABLE #49-2

Q: "Now what do you think should be the main emphasis in most prisons -- punishing the individual convicted of a crime, trying to rehabilitate the individual so that he might return to society as a productive citizen, or protecting society from future crimes he might commit?"

	1982	1982[1]	1981	1981
	%	%	%	%
To rehabilitate	44	26	37	49
To protect society	32	33	25	31
To punish	19	29	31	17
To act as a deterrent to others	--	8	--	--
Don't know	5	5	7	7

1 Question Wording: "When a person is sentenced by a court of law, what should be the main aim of imprisonment? To re-educate the prison? To make those who have done wrong pay for it? To protect other citizens, or to act as a deterrent to others?"

Sources: Harris, national, (May 1982: n = 1249); (Jan 1981: n = 1250).
Gallup, national, Jan. 1982, n = 1511.
Gallup for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostalate (CARA), Jan. 1981, national (oversamples of 18-14 year olds, Hispanics, and Blacks) n = 1729.
NBC News/Associated Press, July 1981, national, n = 1599.

TABLE #49-3

Q: "There are different opinions about the main purpose of prisons. Which one of the statements on this card comes closest to expressing your point of view on prisons?"

	%
"The main purpose of prisons is to keep criminals separate from the rest of society until they can be rehabilitated and returned to society."	53
Or	
"The main purpose of prisons is to punish criminals and keep them away from the rest of society."	32
Both equally (vol.)	12
Don't know	3

Source: Roper, March 1980, national, n = 2002.

Detailed Observation

In a recent study in Michigan, overwhelming majorities of residents and criminal justice professionals said the main purpose of criminal justice is punishment. Yet, nearly two residents out of three also named rehabilitation as a major goal (compared with only a third of the leaders). Making penalties stricter to "scare potential offenders" was also favored by a majority of residents. Interestingly, leaders' estimates of residents' views was consistently wrong.

TABLE #49-4

Q: "Do you agree or disagree that..."* (Asked of Michigan leaders and residents.)
Q: "What is your estimate of the percentage of the public who agrees that..."* (Asked of Michigan leaders.)

	Percent Agreeing with Each Statement		
	Residents	Leaders	Leaders' Estimate of Residents' Views
	%	%	%
"The purpose of criminal justice is to punish offenders?"	90	90	59
"The purpose of criminal justice is to lock up those offenders who commit the greatest amount of crime."	79	61	86
"The purpose of criminal justice is to provide programs for offenders to become good citizens?"	63	37	12
"The purpose of criminal justice is to scare potential offenders by locking up convicted offenders for long periods of time."	59	15	75
"The purpose of criminal justice is to provide programs so that victims and offenders can agree on restitution."	50	--	--

* Question wording was reconstructed from the written report which may not exactly match the wording used in the actual survey.

Source: Norris Cooperative for the Michigan Prison and Jail Overcrowding Project, June 1985, State of Michigan residents, n = 820, Michigan criminal justice leaders (state and local), n = 434.

****

FINDING #50

IN ADDITION, PEOPLES' VIEWS ABOUT HOW TO REDUCE CRIME SEEM EITHER INCONSISTENT OR DEPENDENT ON THE CONTEXT OR QUESTION WORDING. FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE LARGE NUMBERS SAY THAT STIFFER PRISON SENTENCES WOULD HELP REDUCE CRIME, AN EQUAL NUMBER ALSO SAY MORE EMPHASIS ON REHABILITATION WOULD ACCOMPLISH THE SAME GOAL.

****

TABLE #50-1

Q: "What do you think can be done to reduce crime?" (Asked of those who said something can be done to reduce the repeat crime rate, 69% of total sample.)

	%
Stiffer sentences	36
Stronger rehabilitation	36
No parole	15
Less leniency in prison	8
Enforce capitol punishment	8
Find jobs for inmates when released	8
More selective paroles	4
Punish without prison	1

Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.
Source: Gallup, Jan. 1982, national, n = 1511.

TABLE #50-2

Q: "What do you think is the best way of reducing crime?"

	%
More effective punishment	29
Better police protection	18
Reduce unemployment/improved the economy	6
More use of the death penalty	5
Improved education	4
Emphasize morality/family values	4

Source: CBS News/New York Times, June 1981, national, n = 1433.

Detailed Observation

Evidence suggests that at least theoretically, Americans believe that rehabilitation can be successful.

TABLE #50-3

Q: "Most persons who go to prison continue to commit crimes after they have been released. Do you think anything can be done to substantially reduce this 'repeat rate', or not?"

	%
Yes	69
No	19
No opinion	12

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1982, national, n = 1511.

Detailed Observation

While nearly seven in ten say that prison life is not "harsh" enough, even larger numbers support a number of specific reforms -- most of which would have the effect of making prison life more humane. Large numbers of citizens are at least theoretically optimistic that rehabilitation can work and say that a number of prison reforms would both improve prison life and reduce crime. The proposals most often favored are requiring prisoners to learn a trade and to read and write before their release, separating first offenders from other prisoners, and making prisoners do work that the state would otherwise have to hire people to do.

TABLE #50-4

Q: "Do you think that conditions in this country's prisons are too harsh, not harsh enough, or just about right?"

	%
Too harsh	13
Just about right	18
Not harsh enough	53
Not sure	16

Source: Gallup, national, Jan. 1982, n = 1511.

TABLE #50-5

Q: "I am going to read you some proposals that have been made to improve prisons and to reduce crime. Please tell me whether you think the proposal is a good idea or a poor idea?"

	Good Idea	Poor Idea	No Opinion
	%	%	%
"Require prisoners to have a skill or to learn a trade to fit them for a job before they are released from prison."	94	4	2
"Require every prisoner to be able to read and write before he or she is released from prison."	89	8	3
"Establish two kinds of prisons: one for first offenders who have not committed serious crimes, and one for those who have committed serious crime."	88	8	4
"Keep prisoners constructing building, making products or performing services that the state would have to hire other people to do."	83	13	4
"Pay prisoners for their work but require them to return two-thirds of this amount to their victims or to the state for the cost of maintaining them in prison."	81	15	4
"Refuse parole to any prisoner who has been paroled before for a serious crime."	80	14	6
"In order to keep families together, permit wives to spend some weekends each year with their husbands in special guest houses within the prison grounds."	61	31	8

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1982, national, n = 1511.

****

FINDING #51

REHABILITATION IS FELT TO BE IMPORTANT FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS. BUT THE PUBLIC IS DIVIDED ON WHETHER ADDITIONAL MONEY AND RESOURCES DIRECTED TOWARD THE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY WOULD SOLVE THE PROBLEM.

****

TABLE #51-1

Q: "In dealing with juvenile offenders, do you think the most important concern should be punishment or rehabilitation?"

	%
Punishment	37
Rehabilitation	48
Both (vol.)	9
Not sure	6

Source: NBC News/Associated Press, Nov. 1981, national, n = 1602.

TABLE #51-2

Q: "Now I'm going to read to you a list of statements. Please tell me whether or not you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree."

"...Increased participation in sports by youth would greatly reduce crime."

	%	%
Strongly agree	42	> 82
Somewhat agree	40	
Somewhat disagree	11	> 15
Strongly disagree	4	
Don't know	3	3

Source: Research and Forecasts Inc. for the Miller Brewing Company, Oct. 1982, national, n = 1348.

TABLE #51-3

Q: "I want to ask you about a number of problems we face. For each would you tell me which of these statements best expresses your views about the problem?"

"...Crime and juvenile delinquency?"

	%
If we put enough money and resources into solving this problem we would go a long way towards ending it.	40
More money wouldn't help this problem very much because it's caused by things that money doesn't have much effect on.	52
Don't know	8

Source: Roper, April 1981, national, n = 1000.

****

FINDING #52

HOWEVER INCONSISTENT PUBLIC OPINION MAY BE IN OTHER AREAS, RESULTS CLEARLY SHOW THAT THE PUBLIC BELIEVES THE PRISON SYSTEM IS NOT ACCOMPLISHING ITS GOALS, THAT LITTLE REHABILITATION IS TAKING PLACE, AND THAT, INSTEAD, PRISON LIFE HAS A HARDENING EFFECT AND CAUSES RELEASED INMATES TO COMMIT MORE CRIMES.

****

TABLE #52-1

Q: "I'm going to mention several things people sometimes say about crime. After each, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with it. If a person spends time in jail chances are good he won't commit any more crimes after he gets out of jail."

	%
Agree	13
Disagree	83
No opinion	4

Source: ABC News, Dec. 1982, national, n = 2464.

TABLE #52-2

Q: "Do you feel that conditions today in most prisons result in rehabilitating those who are committed there or are conditions turning them into more hardened criminals than before?"

	%
Rehabilitating	13
Making them more hardened criminals	72
Not sure (vol.)	15

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for Time, June 1982, national (registered voters), n = 1010.

****

FINDING #53

IN THE EARLY 1980s, MAJORITIES OF THE PUBLIC SAID THEIR STATES NEEDED MORE PRISONS, BUT PEOPLE WERE RELUCTANT TO PAY HIGHER TAXES TO MEET THIS NEED. IN FACT, BUILDING MORE PRISONS WAS FELT TO BE A COMPARATIVELY LOW PRIORITY, EVEN IF MORE TAX MONEY WERE AVAILABLE.

****

TABLE #53-1

Q: "In your opinion, does your state need more prisons, or not?"

	%
Yes, needs more	57
No, doesn't	30
Don't know	13

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1982, national, n = 1511.

TABLE #53-2

Q: "If more prisons were needed in your state, would you be willing to pay more taxes to help build these prisons, or not?"

	%
Yes	49
No	44
No opinion	7

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1982, national, n = 1511.

Detailed Observation

Even if tax dollars were available, building more prisons is only rated as a middle priority, slightly more important than the space program or highway construction but less important than helping the poor or hiring more police.

TABLE #53-3

Q: "Some authorities have said that, to curb crime, it is important that the country build more jails and/or increase their capacity of our prison system. This will require the use of tax dollars. Do you think it is..."

	Expand Prisons %	Space Program %	Not Sure %
"...more important to build/expand our prisons, or spend the money on the space program."	61	26	13

	Expand Prisons %	Build Highways %	Not Sure %
"...more important to build/expand our prisons, or spend the money on building highways."	60	28	12

	Expand Prisons	Dependent Children	Not Sure
"...more important to build/expand our prisons, or to spend the money on aid to dependent children."	25	65	10

	Expand Prisons %	Job Creation %	Not Sure %
"...more important to build/expand our prisons, or to spend the money on programs of job creation."	17	77	7

	Expand Prisons %	More Police %	Not Sure %
"...more important to build/expand our prisons, or to spend the money on hiring more police."	30	59	11

Source: Yankelovich, Skelly & White for Time, June 1982, national (registered voters), n = 1010.

****

FINDING #54

AN OBSTACLE TO BUILDING MORE PRISONS IS THE PUBLIC'S UNWILLINGNESS TO LIVE NEAR THEM. FEWER THAN 1 IN 6 SAID "A STATE PRISON" WAS SOMETHING THEY WOULD NOT MIND HAVING WITHIN 10 MILES OF THEIR HOME. ONLY A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT, AND NUCLEAR AND CHEMICAL WASTE FACILITIES WERE MORE UNACCEPTABLE.

****

TABLE #54-1

Q: "If you had two of those within 10 miles of here, which two would you be most willing to have? Which two would you be least willing to have?"

	Most willing to have	Least willing to have
	%	%
A drug rehabilitation center	53	6
A mental hospital	45	6
A steel mill	39	4
A coal burning utility plant	20	6
A state prison	15	20
A nuclear power plant	9	47
A chemical waste disposal plant	2	41
A nuclear waste disposal plant	1	65

Source: Roper, March 1982, national, n = 2000.

Detailed Observation

Another reason why people say new prison construction is a comparatively low priority may be that they think less expensive alternatives exist. For example, a large number would favor turning unused Army bases into prisons.

TABLE #54-2

Q. "Would you support or oppose this idea: taking old Army bases not now being used and converting them into prisons."

Favor	Oppose	Not Sure
%	%	%
76	18	6

Source: Gallup, Jan. 1982, national, n = 1511.

****

FINDING #55

EVIDENCE ALSO SUGGESTS PUBLIC RESISTANCE TO HAVING "PEOPLE WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD" AS NEIGHBORS -- A LIKELY OBSTACLE TO LOCATING HALFWAY HOUSES AND OTHER ALTERNATIVES THAT INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY.

****

TABLE #55-1

Q: "On this list are various groups of people. Could you please call off the number of any that you would not like to have as neighbors."

	%
Heavy drinkers	58
People with a criminal record	49
Emotionally unstable people	47
Left wing extremists	34
Right wing extremists	26
Members of minority religious sects or cults	25
Immigrant/foreign workers	10
People of a different race	10
People with large families	8
Unmarried mothers	5
Students	3
None marked	14

Note: Adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Gallup for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), Jan. 1981, national (oversamples of 18-24 year olds, Hispanics, and blacks) n = 1729.

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CRIME AND CORRECTIONS:
THE PUBLIC'S VIEW

A Qualitative Analysis of Public Opinion for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

CRIME AND CORRECTIONS: THE PUBLIC'S VIEW

A Qualitative Analysis of Public Opinion

By
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The Public Agenda Foundation
September, 1986

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES

INTRODUCTION

This report is one of two reports on public attitudes about crime and corrections prepared by the Public Agenda Foundation for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. It presents an analysis of a series of ten focused group discussions (or focus groups) on the subject of crime, corrections, prison overcrowding and alternatives to incarceration. Its companion volume, Crime and Corrections: An Analysis of Public Opinion Data since 1975, is, as its title indicates, a compilation and analysis of existing survey data from a variety of sources over the last ten years. The purpose of both of these Public Agenda reports is to help the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation understand the public's thinking on these topics so that it may bring the issue to public attention in ways that will enable citizens to understand and seriously consider policy options that face decisionmakers.

Each of the ten group discussions covered in this report was conducted with a cross-section of about a dozen typical citizens and, to insure that responses did not reflect particular problems or concerns in only one region, the groups were convened in different parts of the country. To reflect the population at large, each group was stratified on the basis of sex, age, race and level of education.

At the outset, we should note that research of this kind has, by definition, particular strengths and weaknesses as a methodology. Since group interviews are conducted at considerable length and depth, the results that are generated often amplify or in some cases challenge what might be called the "conventional wisdom" about the public's views. In addition to determining what people's opinions are, focus group interviews delve behind stated opinions to explore why people hold the views they do. In the two hour sessions, the researcher has the opportunity to investigate the bases or

premises on which people's opinions rest. Since the interviews are conducted in great depth, the analysis of the results often generates new insights into people's thinking, shedding light on existing survey results and leading to more sensitive, more nuanced interpretations of public opinion. However, as with any qualitative method, the samples used in focus groups are small and stratified, rather than large and randomly generated, so generalizations within a measurable sampling error cannot be drawn from this or any other qualitative method. As a result, therefore, the observations and interpretations we draw in this report are described as "hypotheses" rather than as definitive research findings or conclusions.

The focus groups were conducted in two series. In the first series, citizens were asked about the general problem of crime, its causes and what they felt could be done to reduce it. Respondents were also asked how they rated various elements of the criminal justice system, including the police, the courts and the prison system. These sessions, together with the Public Agenda's analysis of existing survey data, reveal the context or framework citizens use when considering various aspects of this issue. In this first series of groups, questions were general and open-ended, and constructed so that no avenue of inquiry would be prematurely foreclosed. Citizens were asked to discuss the issue as they saw it, in their own words. In addition, these groups were designed to explore aspects of the issue that might have been neglected in earlier studies, and to identify areas where people were misinformed or had particularly strong views.

The second series of groups was quite different. These sessions were more structured, and intended to examine in particular public attitudes about incarceration and alternatives to incarceration. In these sessions, for example, citizens were given information about the overcrowded condition of America's prisons, then asked to react to a variety of proposals designed to deal with that problem, including each of the following: the construction of more prisons, the repeal of mandatory sentencing and other laws that reduce judicial discretion and may swell the prison population, and various

alternatives to incarceration, including fines, restitution, community service, mandatory drug and alcohol treatment, and intense or "enriched" parole. People were also asked about various types of offenders and crimes, and to specify the kinds of sentencing that would be most appropriate in various cases. Such questions were designed to reveal the conditions or qualifications that citizens might prefer -- or insist on -- with regard to the use of various alternatives to incarceration.

This report presents and discusses hypotheses from both series of discussions. The hypotheses are presented in the report in three sections. The first section presents three key observations about how people define crime and the context in which they think about the problem and various solutions that have been proposed. In our view, these are "guiding principles" that underly people's thinking about the issue as a whole. As such they are basic; they are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future; and they can be enormously helpful in predicting how people will react to changed circumstances or new ideas. Moreover, these guiding observations provide a key to interpreting other public responses and place survey findings, sometimes, in a new light.

The second section presents hypotheses concerning how people think about crime and various components of the criminal justice system. The third section focuses on the matter of incarceration and alternatives to incarceration in particular. These three sections of hypotheses are followed by some brief observations upon the challenge of taking this issue to the public and, finally, a statement of the study's methodology.

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of their colleagues at the Public Agenda in the preparation and analysis of this study and, in particular, to express their appreciation for the substantive contributions to the effort by Judith Kallick and Christine Murdock, and for the careful editing and thoughtful comments of Robert Kingston and Jean Johnson.

***

SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES

The Public Agenda focus group series generated the following hypotheses, each of which is elaborated and illustrated in the following pages of this report. We have also included a commentary with each hypothesis which suggests some of its implications for policy making and public debate on the crime and corrections issue.

The hypotheses are presented in three groups: hypotheses that lay out guiding principles that underly the public's thinking on crime and the criminal justice system; hypotheses that describe public attitudes about crime and the criminal justice system; and, third, hypotheses the focus on public thinking about incarceration and proposed alternatives to incarceration.

Guiding Principles That Underly Public Views about Crime and the Criminal Justice System

Hypothesis 1: Americans define "crime" in immediate and local terms, using their own local areas and their personal experiences as reference points.

Hypothesis 2: Americans' concern about crime is highly personal and focuses on what may happen to them and their families in the future.

Hypothesis 3: Americans feel that the primary goal of the criminal justice system should be to discourage future criminal activity.

Americans' Views about Crime and the Criminal Justice System

Hypothesis 4: Americans feel that criminals are products of their environment and totally reject the idea that criminals are born.

Hypothesis 5: Americans distinguish between what they see as the underlying causes of crime and the more immediate causes of crime. Most see the underlying causes as factors related to poverty and to the values with which children are raised.

Hypothesis 6: Beyond underlying causes, Americans feel that there are two primary short-term or immediate causes of crime -- one of which is the use of illegal drugs.

Hypothesis 7: Even more than drugs, Americans believe that the main short term cause of crime is the lack of adequate deterrents.

Hypothesis 8: Americans rate the police as a most effective component of the criminal justice system and approve further strengthening their hand.

Hypothesis 9: Americans feel that the courts, in contrast to the police, are generally inept at deterring crime or controlling criminals. They see the courts as inefficient, too lenient, and frequently arbitrary.

Hypothesis 10: Americans feel that sentencing should be uniform for similar crimes committed under similar circumstances.

Hypothesis 11: Nonetheless, Americans do feel that it is critically important to take an offender's record into consideration in determining appropriate punishment. Many feel that age should not be a consideration.

Hypothesis 12: Americans feel that the prison system is doing a poor job at accomplishing its main goals.

Hypothesis 13: Americans feel that a primary goal of the criminal justice system is to remove dangerous individuals from society in order to protect the innocent.

Hypothesis 14: Americans feel that another primary goal of the prison system should be to rehabilitate offenders, especially young or first offenders. But they feel that the prison system is falling far short of meeting that goal.

Hypothesis 15: However, Americans are not generally optimistic about the chances for rehabilitation.

Hypothesis 16: While Americans feel that the criminal justice system is failing, their attitudes are often modified when they consider the issue in terms of certain specifics.

Americans' Views about Prison Overcrowding and Alternatives to Incarceration

Hypothesis 17: While Americans are aware of prison overcrowding, they do not recognize its impact on the criminal justice system as a whole or on the ability of prisons to meet the goals the public sets for them -- removing dangerous individuals from society and giving them some chance at rehabilitation.

Hypothesis 18: Americans may, at least initially, resist confronting realistically the choices presented by prison overcrowding and try to devise unrealistic solutions or engage in wishful thinking.

Hypothesis 19: Americans believe that prison overcrowding is caused by an increase in crime. They resist or simply do not believe that the crime rate has leveled off or that mandatory sentencing and stiffer sentencing practices are the cause of prison overcrowding.

Hypothesis 20: Americans feel that greater efforts should be taken to make prison life harder, to make inmates more productive, and to make prisons economically self-sufficient.

Hypothesis 21: Americans are more inclined to support alternatives to incarceration when they understand the cost of building and maintaining new prisons.

Hypothesis 22: The most important source of public support for alternatives to incarceration, however, may be the belief that prisons are failing to accomplish their primary objectives.

Hypothesis 23: Americans strongly favor the use of alternatives to incarceration in particular cases.

Hypothesis 24: While favoring alternatives generally, Americans would nonetheless restrict their use to certain offenders, excluding violent or repeat offenders and drug dealers.

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SECTION II

HYPOTHESES: GUIDING PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERLY PUBLIC VIEWS ON CRIME AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Hypothesis 1: Americans define "crime" in immediate and local terms, using their own local areas and their personal experiences as reference points.

When asked to discuss the problem of crime in America, respondents in different cities spontaneously defined the issue quite differently. In New York City, those interviewed discussed the issue almost exclusively in terms of violent street crime: mugging, robbery or purse snatching. The New York City group was asked to estimate the percentage of crimes that involved violence. Half of the group said the percentage was greater than 75%, and nobody said it was less than 50%. (In fact, these estimates are greatly exaggerated: according to statistics provided by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, only about 12% of all crime involves violence of any kind.)

In contrast to New York City residents who tended to define the issue in terms of violent street crime, respondents in San Diego more often talked about burglary. "When I came here [to San Diego]," one woman said, "we didn't even lock our doors and windows. But we have bars on our windows now because we've been broken into."

Elsewhere, comments of respondents reflected concern about recent highly publicized crimes. In Atlanta, where the community has been terrorized by a notorious series of child murders, one woman said, "Crime has changed my life radically. I have a 12 year old daughter and I stopped working full time so that I can make sure I'm home with her in the afternoon. I think the whole country is like that now. Things aren't as safe as they used to be." Or comments reflected personal knowledge or experience. A man from Chicago who spontaneously discussed crime in terms of rape and assault, explained, "The woman -- and I have seen this happen -- who has been raped goes through more hell than the guy who raped her [and was convicted and sentenced]."

Yet in a comparatively affluent suburb of Chicago, respondents felt that crime is not a serious problem, largely because they themselves did not feel at

risk. "It [crime] all depends on the neighborhood you live in," one man said. "Mine is very good." Interestingly, it was only in Chicago that respondents volunteered that the issue included the activities of organized crime.

Commentary: This seemingly simple finding -- that crime is defined personally, immediately, and locally -- is important for a variety of reasons.

First, it offers some guidance on what survey data about the issue actually measure. Since crime is defined in personal terms and differently in different communities, survey results do not measure the public's sense about the issue in general; instead, they are an amalgam of the personal threats and the magnitude of those threats that Americans in various communities feel throughout the country.

Second, this finding suggests that people in different communities will have different views of what to do about "crime" (which they define differently). Where burglary is a concern, for example, citizens may favor the use of more patrol cars. But in areas where people's greatest fear is mugging or assault, improved street lighting and increasing the number of uniformed police on foot patrol may be popular, while increasing the number of patrol cars or undercover police may be considered useless. Those most concerned about rape and assault may feel that the way to reduce "crime" is to establish more rape crisis centers, raise public awareness of wife beating, and change police procedures and laws so that victims will be more likely to report such crimes and perpetrators will be more likely to be brought to justice. And parents whose main concern is the prevalence of illegal drugs in the schools might view steps to curb drug use and distribution as the way to solve the "crime problem." In sum, the measures people recommend to curb crime or handle criminals are essentially the steps they recommend in response to particular crimes, and the particular crimes they have in mind will be different from one community to an other.

Hypothesis 2: Americans' concern about crime is highly personal and focuses on what may happen to them and their families in the future.

Unlike many other issues on the minds of Americans, concern about crime is highly personal, with people expressing real fear about their own safety, their own property, and the ability of crime to reach into and destroy their own lives. This type of personal fear contrasts markedly with public views on other issues. For example, many citizens express concern about unemployment or the federal deficit, yet feel these issues pose no real or immediate threat to themselves or their way of life. But throughout the focus group discussions of crime -- in all parts of the country, among people of different educational and economic levels -- a personal concern about crime emerged readily, spontaneously. It focused on people's individual lives in the immediate future, what will happen, what could happen to them, unless circumstances improve. Comments in the groups suggest that fear itself is a price many pay because of the threat of crime.

Older citizens in particular, and women and residents of urban areas described the discomfort they feel just walking the streets. Parents expressed concern about their children getting involved with drugs. A Houston area woman whose son had experienced a drug problem described the effect "crime" had on her -- not only in coping with her son's problem, but in terms of her own feelings of guilt, what she felt was her failure as a parent and a person. It became apparent that the fear rather than the fact of crime (and therefore the question of criminal justice) may determine the initial views many people express about this issue.

Second, interviews suggest that people think of the issue in terms of the future. Except for the experience of fear, most respondents had not been directly affected by crime. Rather, they saw it as a danger that might affect them suddenly, disastrously, and without warning. While people do express anger and resentment about people "getting away with crime" or about what widespread crime can do to the fabric of the country, these were ancillary,

second-level concerns. In group after group, discussion turned immediately to people's fear that crime will come into their lives in the future. Whether they were discussing the causes of crime, the actions of the police, the role of the courts, or the function of prisons, the premise that guided these people's thinking was the need to reduce the chances that crime might reach into their lives in the future.

Commentary: The prevalence and immediacy of the fear of crime for so many Americans may explain why people overestimate the percentage of crimes that involve violence or the likelihood that they themselves may become victims. Surveys reveal these overestimations. It may also explain why proposals that appear likely to reduce the fear of crime might be welcomed or embraced by large numbers of Americans -- even if they would not realistically affect the chances that one will become a victim. They may explain, for example, why so many people own guns. No matter what statistics show about the dangers of keeping a loaded gun around the house, people may feel safer with a pistol in their bedroom; and feeling safer, with a concomitant reduction in anxiety, is a tangible benefit in and of itself.

There is an instructive parallel here with the fear of disease, where the level of fear often reflects far more than the actual statistical risk that people face. Americans feel differently about different life-threatening diseases. Heart disease, for example, is known to afflict large numbers of people, yet most Americans are not overly frightened or preoccupied with the fear of heart disease. In general, they feel that their government is doing all it can to cure or prevent the disease, that the medical profession has made great strides in treating heart disease, and that, if an individual is stricken, he will get good treatment and have a good chance of pulling through. Consequently, even though it is a leading cause of death, fear of heart disease is neither widespread nor acute.

In contrast, A.I.D.S. afflicts comparatively small numbers of Americans, yet much larger numbers of citizens feel endangered and at risk. Here the context is different. Large numbers of people think the government is incompetent or powerless to protect them, medical science has made little progress in treating the disease, the spread of the disease seems to be getting worse rather than getting better, and a diagnosis of A.I.D.S. means virtually certain death. Consequently people feel more threatened, they are less rational and sometimes even hysterical about A.I.D.S. Parents' "irrational" fear of having their children exposed to A.I.D.S. by carriers in school, or workers' fear of exposure by colleagues in the workplace -- these, and other pressures to ostracize or isolate A.I.D.S. victims, become more understandable when considered in these terms.

Public thinking about crime, then, may resemble feelings about A.I.D.S. rather than about a threat such as heart disease. People may feel an exaggerated sense of risk that is exacerbated by feelings (discussed in subsequent hypotheses) that decisionmakers are powerless to protect them, that little progress is being made, and that the "system" gives their concerns little priority.

In sum, the simple finding -- that people think of crime in personal terms, as a real threat in their own future -- has implications for many aspects of the issue. The public's uncertainty about gun control laws, for example; the relatively high marks people give to the police, in contrast with other aspects of the criminal justice system; their insistence upon incapacitation as a fundamental goal of the system and their lack of interest in 'punishment' and 'revenge' -- the implications of this hypothesis for these and other questions will become clear as we examine other attitudes towards crime and incarceration later in this report.

Hypothesis 3: Americans feel that the primary goal of the criminal justice system should be to discourage future criminal activity.

Respondents were asked which of four goals was the most important for the criminal justice system: punishment, incapacitation, rehabilitation, or deterrence. Nearly everyone interviewed felt that each of these four goals was important, and many found it hard to understand the basis for the question. For example, a Little Rock man wanted the criminal justice system both to incapacitate and to deter, "They (criminals) should be made an example of and then we should get them out of society." A woman in the same session suggested a dual purpose when talking about a young first offender, "He needs to be punished, and he needs to be put away." Respondents tended to be pragmatic rather than theoretical or ideological in their thinking about crime and the criminal justice system. To most of the people we talked with, the criminal justice system should deter people from committing crimes, provide punishment because that may be useful in deterring crime, get people likely to commit crimes off the streets, and make reasonable efforts to turn them into useful law-abiding citizens while they are "incapacitated."

This reaction suggests that questionnaires and public opinion surveys that ask respondents to select a single, or "the most important" goal, for the criminal justice system are likely to be considered unintelligible or frustrating by large numbers of Americans. It is as if people were asked: "What is the main reason you eat -- because food tastes good, or to end your hunger, or to nourish your body?" Most people would say all three reasons are important, and probably think it bizarre to try to name or think of the one main reason. But even though people could not state a single goal for the criminal justice system directly, we were able to infer from their comments what they saw as the most important goal.

Incapacitation, deterrence, and rehabilitation were felt to be important goals (and are discussed in detail later in the report). And many said that punishment had some instrumental importance to the extent that it discouraged or deterred others from breaking the law. But the comments of most respondents showed that they considered discouraging future criminal behavior to be the most important goal by far. And that goal stem directly from the very personal and immediate fear people have for themselves and their families. An Atlanta man talked about a repeat offender charged with armed robbery, "You just want to get him off the street." A woman expressed her fear for her children after Atlanta's series of child murders, "I don't care if they are insane, if they're going to go out and murder my child, then I just don't ever want them on the streets again!" A San Diego man, after talking at length about crime and what to do with offenders, stated his goal for the criminal justice system with some frustration, "Why don't they go back and try to stop crime period (rather than building more prisons). Again and again, in session after session, the focus of the respondents was on the future and how to stop crime from happening.

Commentary: This hypothesis is a lynchpin in explaining public attitudes about various components of the criminal justice system (discussed in detail later in the report). To take just one example, this view sheds light on the finding that large numbers of Americans favor more police protection, including foot patrols in urban neighborhoods and uniformed officers in high crime areas. People reason that the mere presence of the police discourages crime; and protecting citizens by discouraging crime (rather than capturing, incapacitating, punishing or rehabilitating those who have been caught) is seen to be the most important function of the criminal justice system.

Virtually every aspect of public opinion about crime stems from the public's view that the primary goal of the criminal justice system is to prevent crime in the future. All survey data about crime, criminal justice, the prisons, etc. should be understood and considered in light of this belief. This result

may also explain why professionals and the public frequently do not communicate about the issue. In general, criminal justice professionals focus their attention on crime after it occurs; for criminal justice planners, prosecuters, judges and law enforcement officers, key issues facing the system involve the apprehension of criminals, or dealing with those who have been caught, or treating with justice those who have been arrested, charged or convicted. But citizens see the entire issue from a different framework; to them, the most important goal of the system is to prevent crime in the first place. People do not define or even usually think about the issue in terms of prison overcrowding or alternatives to incarceration or the backlog in the courts or the deployment of police. Rather, citizens see the issue of crime and criminal justice and judge the success of any effort in terms of a system that discourages potential offenders and protects people like themselves. To the public, that is the primary goal. And so the public's view of the criminal justice system, and their widespread discontent with various components, depends on their perception of how well or poorly the system is felt to be accomplishing its primary mission.

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SECTION III

HYPOTHESIS: AMERICANS' VIEWS ABOUT CRIME AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Hypothesis 4: Americans feel that criminals are products of their environment and totally reject the idea that criminals are born.

Respondents said with near unanimity that criminals are made, not born. Only few respondents remarked that a small number of criminals are "born bad." A Chicago area man said, "I don't think it has to do with upbringing. You can raise 5 or 6 children, and one of those 5 or 6 is going to turn out bad, no matter what you do." A Houston woman described two sisters she had known while growing up: one of them, she said, was happily married, the mother of three well-adjusted children and a solid member of the community; but the other sister, the woman said, had been "born bad." The respondent said: "She (the second sister) was 'bad' in high school, and she's still 'bad' today." (The respondent's reference involved crimes such as theft, child abuse, substance abuse and prostitution.) But even she felt that the two sisters were an exception to the rule, and that most criminals are "made, not born."

With these exceptions noted, respondents' sense that criminals are "made, not born" proved to be deeply held and unshakable. "Babies aren't born bad," said a woman from Boston. "No way!" When asked to react to case histories of particular criminals and crimes, respondents often spoke in psychological terms. For example, when discussing what would be an appropriate punishment for a juvenile who, while in a facility for delinquent youth, had set fire to his cottage, then attempted to cut his wrists, respondents from several groups made comments such as, "That boy's trying to get attention," or "He's calling out for help," or "He's an angry person." We should emphasize that such comments -- while sometimes appearing to suggest mitigating circumstances -- were here <u>not</u> offered as excuses for the behavior; rather, respondents seemed to be thinking out loud, as if trying to understand the reasons why certain individuals committed particular crimes. Implicit in their efforts is the premise that there is an explanation, and that it is rooted in the

circumstances and background of the individual who has committed the crime. A woman from Chicago expressed the sentiment of most respondents when she said, "People are not born to be criminals, or anything else in life. There are circumstances, situations, daily activities that help to form their attitudes and shape what they become."

Respondents generally accepted the premise that individuals are taught to be law-abiding by their parents, by the schools, by the church, and by society in general. Several respondents described how they themselves had been taught, sometimes painfully, to control their behavior in childhood. Some anecdotes were sensitive, and some were stereotypic and harsh. "If I got a beating in school," a Little Rock man said, "I knew that when I'd go home, my daddy would take down the paddle and give me another one." Others described how their parents used a carrot and stick approach -- for example, giving and withdrawing privileges or affection, thereby helping them to learn "right from wrong." Still others discussed the impact that key figures, like teachers or religious persons, had on them in their formative years. Many respondents agreed that one reason why so many disadvantaged children end up in trouble is that they often do not learn that they cannot act out their impulses. This, respondents felt, combines with society's general failure to discourage criminal activity: potential criminals have no fear of retribution, and little reason, in the form of other positive opportunities, to obey the law.

Commentary: This view that criminals are "made, not born" has important and direct implications for the idea of rehabilitation. When Americans believe that criminals can be made, they incline also to believe that criminals can be "unmade," rehabilitated -- if the opportunity and motivation to change exist. Later in the report we shall discuss respondents' views about that issue at greater length and it will be vitally important to understand the link between the two issues, the premise upon which beliefs about the possibility of rehabilitation rest.

Hypothesis 5: Americans distinguish between what they see as the underlying causes of crime and the more immediate causes of crime. Most see the underlying causes as factors related to poverty and to the values with which children are raised.

Most respondents believed that a disproportionate amount of crime, especially violent crime, is committed by non-white males under twenty-five, who live in ghettos or urban areas. However, with the exception of a handful of people, there was no hint of racism, indeed, no mention of race as a factor at all. Rather, respondents said that the underlying causes of crime resulted from a variety of social factors related to growing up in what sociologists would call the "underclass." An Atlanta man said, "Where there's poverty there's going to be more crime." A man from the suburbs of Chicago saw the issue in terms of cause and effect. He said, "They [criminals] have to steal; it's what they have to do to get by." A New York City woman said, "It comes down to economics. Unless you have a certain amount of education or a tremendous amount of motivation, you are not going to get very far. And year after year, when you stay in the same job with the same income while everything is getting more and more expensive around you, [your life] gets really frustrating [and this leads to crime.]"

Beyond generalized "economics", respondents cited poor living conditions, lack of education and inadequate job opportunities as underlying factors leading to crime. A New York City man said, "The fact that an individual lives in unbearable conditions [causes a certain anger which leads to crime]." A Little Rock woman said that one reason for that area's high crime rate is that Arkansas is a "low paying state" without a lot of job opportunities. A woman from Westchester County, New York said, "I think that all these things [crime] have come about because of unemployment."

Many felt that other factors related to growing up in what is sometimes called the "underclass" were even more important than sheer economics. Foremost among these factors were said to be psychological or emotional effects. We should emphasize that those expressing views about these factors included black and white respondents and people from different parts of the country, of different backgrounds and ages, and with varying levels of education.

Numerous respondents said that children in the "underclass" too often suffer from poor nutrition, child abuse, emotional and physical neglect, lack of love, inadequate intellectual stimulation, the absence of good "role models" -- and that they are often raised by teenagers or unwed mothers who do not meet their child's basic needs. "If the child is brought up with love, care and respect, I don't think he is going to end up there [in prison] in the first place," said a man from St. Louis. A man from the suburbs of Chicago said, "It all boils down to one thing -- the family." A San Diego woman said, "One reason for it [crime] is all the broken families." And a Little Rock woman said, "I think you have to look at: 'Why does he [a young offender who has committed a violent crime] want to be mean?' I think if you ever look back, it's somewhere in their childhood."

Some respondents also cited peer pressure, gangs, and the influence of older children who share the values of what some sociologists call the "culture of poverty" as factors leading to high crime rates among poor, predominantly non-white youths. A woman from New York City said, "A lot of it has to do with peer pressure." A Chicago woman said, "It starts when they are 12 or 13 -- there are so many gangs, children in school with guns and knives, threatening their teachers."

Some respondents named other underlying factors that reflect changing values in the whole society. A man from the Chicago group said, "Parents don't seem to be as responsible as they were years ago. A lot of parents don't care what their kids are doing when they're not home." Other respondents complained that society had turned away from what some call "traditional" values. A woman from

Chicago said, "Young parents today are too worried about the kind of preschool they're going to send their kids to, versus the basic, fundamental ideas of teaching them right from wrong, and to respect grandma and grandpa." A Chicago man added, "As a kid, I was always taught to respect [other people]. I think we have lost that respect today."

Many also cited the failure of parents to instill in their children feelings of self-esteem, self-confidence and ambition; or to teach basic values such as the importance of work, respect for authority, and the ability to defer gratification. A Little Rock man said, "They [such children] need education and then a full schedule of work and discipline." A woman from the same group said, "Teach them [such children] right from wrong, then teach them love and nonviolence." And a man from New York City said, "You are what you are as a consequence of your background."

Those citing such factors did not always agree about all of them or their comparative importance. For example, some respondents in Boston said it is a key factor that religion is less important to most Americans today. A Chicago woman worried about the effect of "celebrities [and other 'heroes' whom the young admire] who are caught using drugs." Others focussed on the effect of television-watching and the resulting lack of what one woman called "socializing experiences" for young people. "I'd like to get regulations [to put a limit] on television viewing [for children]," a Little Rock man said. A man from Atlanta said one cause of crime is "too much violence on TV." And several mentioned general permissiveness -- like the Chicago man who said, "The simple fact that parents today do not know how to tell their children, 'No'."

But the primary reasons for crime, and for the disproportionate amount of crime committed by nonwhite youths raised in poverty, were said to involve the scars and long term emotional effects of growing up as they did. Most respondents felt that unless what they called these "root causes" were addressed, the problem of crime would continue to plague society into the

foreseeable future. A woman from St. Louis said, "If we could do something when the children are younger, then maybe they wouldn't grow up and commit these crimes. That's what bothers me -- how can we make it better in the long term." A woman from Atlanta said, "We should go at it [the crime problem] from a different level -- with the children." Finally, several respondents expressed their willingness to tackle such issues themselves. A woman from Little Rock (the only group where a few racist comments were heard) said, "These kids are screaming for love and attention. They need that help. Don't condemn these poor kids because of their age -- let's help them!" Another woman, also from Little Rock, said, "They [these children] need help. Give them to me. I'll help them."

In one session, respondents were asked to pretend that they were advising the government about what to do about crime. Several people suggested the underlying causes must be addressed, and named the Head Start program as a good example. But an older white male questioned the effectiveness of Head Start. For a few moments, he and several others argued the merits of the program rather vigorously, with no-one changing his views. But when another respondent -- an articulate and obviously prosperous young black attorney -- said that he knew the program worked because he had been a Head Start baby himself, the older man was visibly moved. He said he had "no idea" the program had been so successful and, after a moment or two, said his views about the program had changed and that (in his pretend role of advisor to the government) he would strongly support more funding for Head Start and other equally successful efforts.

Commentary: The sense that people have a differentiated and rather sophisticated set of views about the causes of crime suggests that they might support quite different approaches for dealing with the issue. The widely held view that there are "underlying" causes of crime suggests that large numbers would support so-called liberal efforts to tackle crime by focussing on its "breeding grounds"-- poverty, unemployment, education, etc. Support for such efforts, however, is accompanied by two important conditions.

First, people have to feel that such efforts would be successful. The touching interaction described above reflects this; and surveys show that there is widespread public support for Head Start and other particular components of programs that were originally part of the War on Poverty.

The second condition reflects people's view that addressing the causes of crime is not in itself sufficient. Since people's overriding concern is to reduce the risk of crime for themselves and their families in the immediate future, long-range policies to address the causes of crime provide only a partial, and a less than fully satisfactory response. So in some cases, the public may favor what are often called "conservative" approaches (as discussed later in the report). Regarding crime, as in other major issues facing the country, the public's view is neither neatly "liberal" or "conservative".

Hypothesis 6: Beyond underlying causes, Americans feel that there are two primary short-term or immediate causes of crime -- one of which is the use of illegal drugs.

Respondents felt that one of the two most important short-term or immediate causes of crime involves illegal drugs. Many said that addicts had to support their habit through criminal activity; they concluded that much property crime such as purse snatching, burglary and petty theft, was commited by addicts or drug users. A Chicago man said, "I think there are more robberies to feed a drug habit than to feed a family, much more." A man from San Diego said, "If we could get rid of the drugs, we'd get rid of 90% of the crime in the U.S."

But concern about drugs involved more than their effects in burglary and purse snatching. Indeed, respondents' feelings about illegal drugs were deep and pronounced. Many said that drug use was increasing and infecting the entire society. They suggested that selling drugs was both a criminal act in itself and a crime likely to lead to other crimes, since buyers become addicted and then steal to pay for their habit. A number of people therefore singled out "pushers" as people who should be rounded up and incapacitated. In fact, "shot" was the word used by some (although in a figurative sense). Among respondents' most pressing concerns was the availability of drugs in schools and the absolute ease with which students and others could get illegal drugs. "My son's a good kid," a man from Houston said. "He's 20 years old and doesn't use drugs. At least I think he doesn't. But he can get in his car anywhere in town and in ten minutes drive someplace where he can buy any kind of drug imaginable."

Respondents totally rejected the view that drug dealers were nonviolent or small time offenders who should receive lower priority in terms of arrest, prosecution or incarceration. To the contrary, many placed drug dealers near the very top of their list of criminals who should be targeted by police and removed from society. A woman from San Diego said, "I think a drug dealer who makes his living off of kids and other victims is one of the worst criminals

in our country, and he should be locked up." A Houston woman, who works with juvenile drug users through her church, echoed this view; she got involved, she said, because of her son who had started using drugs in high school, and whose life was ruined as a result.

Commentary: Peoples' views about drugs and drug pushers were deeply held and appear unlikely to change. Many respondents, moreover, especially those with high school age children, had personal experience with the problem. Thus, criminal justice professionals who, concerned about prison overcrowding, hope to rally public support for the idea that drug pushers should not be incarcerated because they are nonviolent offenders will almost certainly be unsucessful. Importantly, however, respondents did not want to punish drug users; in fact, many did not even want to punish pushers. Rather, most of those interviewed seemed to view the issue as did one woman from San Diego, who said that illegal drug use was like a disease infecting the body of society and that drug dealers were responsible for spreading the infection. Respondents felt that the way to deal with the problem was to remove dealers from society, then provide effective treatment so that users would become free of their addiction or need to rely on drugs in the first place. However, especially since the young and others with particular vulnerabilities faced the greatest risk of contamination, respondents felt that drugs should be regarded as a great danger and given a top priority in the overall battle against crime.

Hypothesis 7: Even more than drugs, Americans believe that the main short term cause of crime is the lack of adequate deterrents.

Respondents consistently drew a sharp distinction between the underlying causes of crime and what they saw as the immediate or short-term causes. While the former -- poverty, unemployment, child abuse -- were felt to be what breeds crime in general, the latter -- significantly, lack of any real deterrent, lack of any real threat of punishment -- were felt to be why a particular individual commits a particular crime at a given time. Comments suggested that respondents totally reject the idea that everyone raised in a disadvantaged environment is likely to end up as a criminal, pointing out that many non-white males from poverty-stricken neighborhoods do not commit crimes. Respondents concluded that there must be other factors at work, since even those with the greatest potential to become criminals must decide whether to commit a particular crime and, in doing so, take into account immediate or short-term factors.

Respondents said the most important short term cause of crime is the lack of adequate deterrents. "You [most criminals] get no punishment whatsoever," a Little Rock man said. A woman from that group added, "Too many laws let these people [criminals] slide. And the rich are the same -- they steal from the government and you [the taxpayer] pay for it." A man from San Diego complained, to general agreement, that there is not swift, certain punishment for those who break the law. Another man bitterly complained that, under the current system, it would be reasonable for someone contemplating a crime to expect light punishment or no punishment at all -- even if he were caught in the first place. A woman added, "People are not scared of getting in trouble anymore; everyone gets off so easily." In sum, respondents felt that society has failed to establish institutions that discourage crime, and most felt that it has failed miserably in that regard.

Commentary: Respondents' comments and, commonly, their expressions of frustration and outrage, were often based on personal experience. Many had experienced direct contact with the criminal justice system, either as victims, or as friends or relatives of victims, or as jurors, or as friends of someone who worked in the criminal justice system. (Criminal justice professionals were excluded from the sessions.) Such personal knowledge suggests that public opinion about the issue is both deeply felt and deeply rooted, and therefore unlikely to change easily.

Hypothesis 8: Americans rate the police as a most effective component of the criminal justice system and approve further strengthening their hand.

People in the focus groups were asked to rate the performance of various components of the criminal justice system. The police generally received a high rating, and virtually no one we spoke with attributed crime to police incompetence or lack of efficiency or motivation. In general, people expressed admiration and respect for the police. One woman called them "the community peace keepers." An Atlanta man said, "I think it's insane that anyone would want to be a cop. They're paid peanuts, they're given bullets they can't use -- it's insane." Another man said, "They [the police] are doing a good job with all the rules and laws they have to abide by. But even if you pour more money into it [the criminal justice system], it is not going to make a difference because the laws are what make the difference." A Chicago area man said, "99% of them [the police] are doing a good job." Asked why the crime rate in the U.S. was higher than in foreign countries, a New York man, to general agreement, said: "They have more police."

Police are seen as crime prevention agents. Indeed, the sentiment, in the words of a man from Atlanta, "to take the handcuffs off the police" is consistent with this view. The police try their best, people feel; but, to many citizens, the police are blocked from doing their job by procedural obstacles, i.e., "handcuffs." Consistent with this view is the feeling also that the laws are, in the words of a San Diego man, "tilted in favor of the criminal." People feel that the rights of a criminal are such that the "right" of innocent people to be free from domestic violence is threatened, and so again the system does not accomplish it main goal.

Commentary: People tended to see the police as the one "strong link" in the criminal justice system in that they can get dangerous people off the streets and therefore reduce the likelihood of their committing crimes in the future. This contrasts markedly with people's rating of the courts and the prisons (see hypotheses below), institutions that were not felt to be adequately doing their jobs as the public defines them.

Nonetheless, comments suggesting that the public would trade off some Constitutional protections to gain increased freedom of action for the police may reflect top of the head rather than considered judgments for many Americans. Survey data suggest that Americans have serious reservations about expanding police search and wiretap powers, and Public Agenda research on public attitudes in other Constitutional areas (see The Speaker and the Listener: A Public Perspective on Freedom of Expression) suggests that people's views often change drastically when they re-consider the implications of removing Constitutional safeguards.

Hypothesis 9: Americans feel that the courts, in contrast to the police, are generally inept at deterring crime or controlling criminals. They see the courts as inefficient, too lenient, and frequently arbitrary.

Respondents' views about the courts were markedly different from their views about the police. In general, the courts were quite poorly regarded. "Whenever I'm depressed and need cheering up," said a Boston man, "I think about the criminal court system and get a good laugh." Judges and judgments were often felt to be arbitrary. "There is no equalization among the judges [in terms of sentencing]," said a man from St. Louis. "It [a sentence] is just what they want to allow personally."

Many felt that judges and the laws were often too lenient. "Justice isn't stiff enough here," said a man from Westchester County. A man from New York City added, "All the people who want to commit a crime see that they will not be put in jail for too long, so they'll figure it's not such a dangerous lifestyle. That's why you read about all the statistics about the same people committing five or six crimes." Numerous respondents also said that the law is "tilted" in favor of criminals. A Chicago man complained, "We, as a people, have no rights at all. We have to be a [drug] dealer, we have to be a criminal to get by in this country. Everything is in favor of the criminal." A woman from San Diego added, "If someone breaks into your house and you shoot him, you're wrong -- even though he broke into your house."

Respondents were also upset about endless appeals, delays and "loopholes" that either tie up the system or get convictions overturned. "Our courts are so clogged with lawsuits," one man said, "that they don't have time to take care of criminals." A man from Atlanta said, "The system has so many loopholes that if a good attorney is paid enough money, he can get you off." A Chicago woman

added, "They [offenders] can go out and commit ten crimes before they are finally brought up to trial on their first crime, because they're out on bail. It's going to pay for them to do it [commit crimes], and the little penalty that they pay doesn't bother them."

Commentary: Since respondents' believe that one way to deter crime is through swift, sure, uniform punishment, it is understandable that they are critical of a legal system that is, in their view, slow, expensive, and often seen to be arbitrary and too lenient. Few respondents understood that the courts are overloaded, and many felt that plea bargaining and other efforts to speed justice led to injustice. In large part, people felt that such efforts merely reduce the punishment that a criminal receives, leading wrong-doers to assume that they will get off lightly in the event that they are caught.

The low esteem that people feel for the "courts" may also reflect feelings about the entire judiciary, including the view that loopholes and "smart, expensive lawyers" mean that those who can afford it can usually escape punishment. Disatisfaction with the courts was deep, multi-faceted, and widely held -- which suggests that public support for the judiciary is not only shallow but also that there is the potential that many Americans might favor and support radical change (or those calling for radical change) in this area.

Hypothesis 10: Americans feel that sentencing should be uniform for similar crimes committed under similar circumstances.

Another common complaint made in the groups, and an important reason for respondents' feeling that the criminal justice system does not discourage crime, involved sentencing. Respondents felt that sentences are often arbitrary or different for the same crime, depending on the laws of a state or the disposition of a particular judge. "You can go kill somebody here and you might get a few months," a Little Rock man said. "But if you rob somebody, you might get 20 years." In respondents' view, the length of sentence for various crimes should be more uniform and judges should have less discretion -- or what they saw as arbitrary authority -- to impose different sentences for the same offense. "I'd like to see throughout the States a uniform system of laws [and penalties]," said a man from Westchester County.

Respondents also felt that sentences should be uniform for pragmatic reasons, saying the law deters most effectively when the punishment for an offense is understood ahead of time. A St. Louis woman drew this comparison: "When you tell the child: 'If you do such-and-such, you'll go to your room,' he knows what his penalty is ahead of time. But if he does do such-and-such, and one time you punish him and the next three times time you don't, he isn't sure whether breaking the rules is worth it, whether it's worth the risk. He doesn't know when you're serious, doesn't know where the line is. The same holds for any law. People have to know what's in store for them." Moreover, people expressed frustration and anger at the lack of tough, consistent sentencing. As one man put, "Even if someone gets six years, he knows he's going to get out in six months. It's meaningless."

Commentary: While respondents strongly favored uniform sentences, their views on the issue were neither dogmatic nor rigid. Indeed, most were willing to let criminal justice professionals determine what various sentences should be. Respondents' main concerns were fairness and consistency. Most said it was

unjust for two people with similar records who commit the same crime to be given different sentences, merely because they are convicted in different states or tried by different judges, or because one had enough money to hire a "smart lawyer." As we shall discuss in greater detail later in this report, respondents also strongly favored the idea of mandatory sentencing, largely for the same reason: they felt that mandatory sentences eliminate unfairness and simultaneously discourage crime by letting potential offenders know "what's in store for them."

Hypothesis 11: Nonetheless, Americans do feel that it is critically important to take an offender's record into consideration in determining appropriate punishment, but many feel that age should not be a consideration.

Respondents were given various hypothetical crimes and criminals, and asked to talk about the kinds of sentences each should receive. These exercises were designed to tease out the criteria respondents use in thinking about appropriate punishments for various types of crime and in determining whether individual wrong-doers should be treated leniently or severely.

By far the most important variable involved an offender's record of previous offenses. Respondents were far more willing to be lenient with first or even second offenders than with repeaters or those with a long arrest record. Their willingness to be lenient was even more pronounced when an offender's record included facts demonstrating good citizenship and responsibility. Hypothetical offenders who were described as happily married, for example, or good parents, or steadily employed, or good students, or merely involved with productive hobbies and interests, were often considered to be prime candidates for alternatives to incarceration.

Youth was not considered to be a criterion for leniency per se, although people did feel that extra effort should be made both to rehabilitate and to preclude further corruption. Many respondents did not think that the age of an offender should be given much weight in determining the length of an appropriate sentence. "A murderer is a murderer," a man from St. Louis said. "It doesn't matter if he's fifteen or fifty -- he should be treated the same as any other type of prisoner. If they [adult offenders] do something and get three years and he [a juvenile] does the same thing, then he should get three years too." As with older offenders, however, respondents said that a youth's record or history of previous offenses was the most important consideration in determining his sentence. A woman from Little Rock said, "A 14 year old who has repeatedly been in trouble and kills someone just for kicks -- he should be treated like an adult." In many cases, respondents felt that except for the

very youngest offenders (perhaps fourteen and under), age alone was minor or inconsequential as a mitigating factor. "Age makes no difference," said a woman from New York City. "So what if he's 16? He murdered someone!"

However, respondents did nonetheless see young offenders as among the best prospects for rehabilitation. And while many wanted young offenders to be tried and sentenced like adults, they did not favor putting them into the same facility that houses adults. "Keep them away from the hard criminals," said a Little Rock man, to general agreement in the group. A Westchester County man said, "I wouldn't put him [a juvenile offender] in with hardened criminals. He should be off in an isolated area." A Chicago area woman said, "I don't care if he's committed murder -- I wouldn't want him to stay [incarcerated] with those others [adult prisoners]." Another man suggested the following: "Show him [the juvenile offender] what an overcrowded prison is like, take him there. So that he won't want to go there."

Most respondents also expressed compassion for offenders they considered to be mentally disturbed. With near unanimity, respondents felt that such offenders should not be put into a normal prison, but rather incarcerated in an institution with special facilities where they would receive psychiatric help. Importantly, however, respondents did not feel that mental illness should be considered an "excuse" for an offense, or that those who were successfully treated for their illness should then be released without fully serving their sentence.

Commentary: Respondents' views about the importance of an offender's record is consistent with the view of many criminal justice professionals. But people's view of the comparative unimportance of age as a determining criteria for deciding whether an offender should be incarcerated is at odds with the views of many professionals. In this exercise, regardless of age, hypothetical offenders described as having a record of previous offenses were felt to deserve much harsher treatment, even when a particular crime was not extremely

serious. In effect, respondents judged the individual as well as the crime; the prime factor they took into consideration seemed to be the likelihood that a particular offender would run afoul of the law in the future. Again, the application of this criterion is a logical derivative of the premise that the goal of the criminal justice system is to discourage crimes in the future. If punishment for juvenile offenders is "too lenient," they will merely be free to repeat their crimes, thus endangering the innocent.

Hypothesis 12: Americans feel that the prison system is doing a poor job at accomplishing its main goals.

Though not regarded as badly as the courts, the prison system was also felt to be doing a poor job. On the one hand, people felt that prison was a terrifying place. "The inmates run the prisons," a Chicago man said. "I was arrested once and kept overnight for a protest," a Westchester County woman said. "I had to use a toilet with no door while the matron stood in front of me. It was humiliating." Others talked about prison violence, assaults, rape and drug use. A San Diego man said, "I would think that for the average person, it [prison] would have to be hell." A woman from suburban Chicago said, "I don't think people go in [to jail] and learn any good lessons. I think they learn absolutely bad lessons." In fact, the hardening effect of prison life on young and first offenders was acknowledged by numerous respondents.

At the same time, a large number of the people interviewed expressed the view that prison life was too easy. "They [inmates] don't do anything," a Houston woman said, "except sit around all day, watching TV. listen to the radio and playing cards." A Westchester County man said, "They've [prison inmates] got meals, they've got friends -- some of these people just want a free room and board." And a Chicago area man voiced this complaint: "I see these people with radios, TVs, porno magazines, VCRs -- and here they're supposed to be serving a life sentence." A number of respondents said that prisoners have access to illegal drugs. "They have all the drugs they want," said a woman from Houston. A San Diego man went further and suggested that the problem was not lack of enforcement but lawbreaking by prison officials: "You can go to prison right now and there's dope being sold and distributed by the guards," he said.

Commentary: The views expressed by many that prison life is simultaneously terrifying and too easy seem to be contradictory. However, as we shall examine later in the report, Americans do have a view of an appropriate prison life that is not violent or inhumane, yet does force inmates to work in some productive fashion. The reactions articulated here may be taken as expressions of disatisfaction with the prisons; and the two extremes on which reactions focussed -- criminality and luxury -- indicate the boundaries of public tolerance.

Hypothesis 13: Americans feel that a primary goal of the criminal justice system is to remove dangerous individuals from society in order to protect the innocent.

Respondents felt that one of the central goals of the criminal justice system is to "incapacitate" offenders who are violent or dangerous to society. "The whole idea behind sending someone to prison is to put them away because they didn't abide by the rules that society set down," said a man from Atlanta. A New York City woman said, "Society has a responsibility to protect itself from people who are dangerous [by locking them up]." A man, asked about a criminal who robbed a liquor store and, in the process, shot but did not kill the store clerk, said, "I just don't want him around anymore."

Many respondents included pushers and drug dealers among those who should be removed from society in order to protect society. Although to many criminal justice and other law enforcement professionals such offenders are not considered guilty of a violent crime, respondents in the Public Agenda groups felt that drug dealers had to be removed from society so that others would not be affected by their activities. At the same time, those interviewed almost universally favored putting addicts into mandatory treatment programs while they were incapacitated.

Most of those interviewed favored the use of capital punishment, and many strongly favored it. But comments in the Public Agenda groups suggest that, at least in part, support for capital punishment may stem from a desire to remove particularly dangerous and violent individuals from society forever -- for foolproof incapacitation -- rather than from any deep seated belief in "an eye for an eye". In one session where respondents supported capital punishment, they were asked to imagine that an escape-proof prison had been created in a remote place (the example used was the moon). They were then asked if they would see that as an acceptable substitute for the death penalty, if convicted murderers were sent to such a place with absolutely no chance they'd get out. A large majority of those who favor capital punishment said such an arrangement would be an acceptable if it were foolproof.

Commentary: These results again suggest that people see prison as means of their self-protection, designed to separate threatening elements out from society. They also suggest that some, and perhaps much, of the sentiment underlying the public's support for capital punishment is the feeling that the criminal justice system is currently incapable of adequately protecting society from murderers and other dangerous capital offenders. Lack of confidence in the system's ability to meet its goals is deep and widespread.

Hypothesis #14: Americans feel that another primary goal of the prison system should be to rehabilitate offenders, especially young or first offenders. But they feel that the prison system is falling far short of meeting that goal.

Respondents said another important goal of prisons -- one that the system is not achieving -- is rehabilitation. Most felt that job training and education should be top priorities for the prison system. Respondents understood that most criminals eventually get out of prison, and this was one reason why they supported rehabilitation. A Chicago woman explained, "I've got to think: 'He's coming back out. Don't send him out the way he went in'."

But support for rehabilitation was based on more than a pragmatic sense of the eventual social consequences of offenders' release. In fact, the threat of eventual release seemed less important than the view that criminals should have an opportunity to straighten out their lives, learn a trade or get an education, and leave prison with the ability to live a productive life. "We've got to give a person who makes a mistake a chance," said a Westchester County man. "If we lose that [belief], we're no better than the animals out on the street." Except for capital punishment, only a tiny minority wanted to punish anyone. "There is something worth salvaging in everybody," said an Atlanta woman. "I would like to rehabilitate everyone in the prisons."

Respondents felt that those most likely to be rehabilitated successfully were young and first offenders, and that if resources were scarce, these groups of offenders should be targeted for help. "They [offenders who are 15 or less] don't need to be stuck in prison at that age. They need to be worked with. Something needs to be done to their brain, not their body," said a woman from Little Rock. Another woman added, "If he [a juvenile offender] was mistreated all his life, then I think he could be rehabilitated. We have to work with them, because once they get to the big prison, it's too late." A man from New York City said, "Beyond a certain age, it's too late [to help a criminal change]. Once they reach a certain age, nothing can be done, they'll always

take the easy way out." In Baltimore, respondents were asked to assume that resources were scarce and to specify for whom rehabilitative efforts should be targeted. They said efforts should be concentrated on those who are likely to be released, intelligent enough to benefit from job training or education, and, most important, sufficiently motivated to do the hard work necessary for rehabilitation.

In addition, respondents almost universally favored special treatment for offenders who were addicts or mentally ill. Mandatory drug or alcohol treatment was favored for users. And offenders with what were felt to be clear psychiatric problems should be hospitalized or receive special help, people said. Asked to adjudicate a particular case involving a juvenile who had committed arson, then tried to cut his wrists, respondents in two sessions said that he should be hospitalized (in a prison hospital) and receive psychiatric treatment. A San Diego man said, "I would make a delineation between people who are psychotic or schizophrenic, and people who are criminals. Sick people should not be in prison."

At the same time, respondents did not feel that addicts or offenders with psychiatric problems should have their sentences reduced. A St. Louis man said, to general approval in the group, "Just because a person's cured and isn't dangerous anymore doesn't mean he should walk out." With the exception of time off for good behavior -- which respondents favored -- nearly everyone interviewed said that, in the interests of fairness and justice, criminals should serve their entire sentence and not be released until their time is up.

We should also emphasize that support for rehabilitation did not mean respondents were in favor of freeing or sharply reducing the sentence of those who were rehabilitated. People's opposition to early release did not stem from lack of confidence in the judgment of prison officials or experts, or the feeling that an offender might in fact be dangerous even though he was considered not to be; rather, most felt that the two issues were separate and should be treated separately. "Criminals should serve their sentence," one man said, "and rehabilitation should give them a second chance when they've served their time." A Little Rock man said, "You do the crime, you do the time."

Commentary: Just as surely as respondents saw the role of prisons as to protect society by incapacitating criminals, so they also saw the role as corrective: to help society by rehabilitating inmates. Virtually no one we interviewed wanted to extract vengence from convicted criminals or "take a pound of flesh." To the contrary, the vast majority felt that while prison life should be hard and prison terms relentless, prison itself should be humane, offer offenders the chance to rehabilitate themselves, and provide treatment for those with psychiatric problems and drug addiction. It was because of the lack of such opportunity and treatment that many felt the prisons are failing.

Hypothesis #15: However, Americans are not generally optimistic about the chances for rehabilitation.

While strongly favoring the idea of rehabilitation, or training for an improved lifestyle, most respondents were not optimistic about the chances, saying that large numbers of prisoners would probably never be rehabilitated, no matter how much opportunity they had. A man from Boston said, "There might be three out of ten [convicts] whom you can rehabilitate. But this 'goodie-goodie' notion that you can save everyone, rehabilitate all of them -- that's nonsense! There are some people who will simply never change." A Little Rock man was more succinct. "Rehabilitation just does not work," he said.

Respondents' pessimism about the prospects for rehabilitation was based in part on their view about the number and type of inmates in America's prisons. "We've got thousands of prisoners to rehabilitate" one man said. "It's a joke." An Atlanta woman said, "You and I and everyone else here [in the group] would probably take advantage of anything the prison had to offer. But you take someone who's been in a street gang, who hardly knows how to read -- this is the person who needs the one-on-one to get the incentive to do this [rehabilitate himself]. And that not likely, is it?" "Prisons are like college," said a woman from Baltimore, "except what you learn is how to break the law and not get caught." A Chicago area man said, "You put an amateur criminal in Cook County jail for six months and he comes out a professional."

Another reason why respondents thought rehabilitation unlikely stemmed from their views about the resources available and the way the prisons are administered. "They [the authorities] put them in prison," said one woman, "and they [inmates] just sit there. They don't school them. They aren't any better when they come out." A woman from Atlanta complained that "They're always spending money on things rather than people, on buildings rather than rehabilitation." A Chicago man said, "They call them 'correctional'

institutions, but there's no 'correction' going on. They [prisons] just house people." A woman from St. Louis said, "Prisons don't teach the prisoners responsibility. They take away responsibility. They feed them, clothe them, provide every single thing they need. So here's a very irresponsible person, who would love to have somebody else take care of him -- and that's what just what they do. I just think the whole jail system stinks."

Commentary: The main purpose of prison, people say, is to discourage crime in the future, and the public's views about rehabilitation, therefore, are multi-faceted and complex. Rehabilitation, even though it may not be normally successful, is considered to be a primary goal of the prison system. And the failure to provide enough opportunity for rehabilitation is one reason why people consider the prisons to be doing a poor job.

But most of those interviewed felt that the prison experience serves no such purpose, that prisoners often sit idle, watching television all day; that the prisons are run by the strongest inmates, with assaults and violence widespread, and prison life serves to harden inmates. In general, people felt that work opportunities, job training, education, psychiatric counseling and drug treatment are inadequate or minimal. Together then, these views help explain why people simultaneously say prison life is terrifying and too easy, and why they feel that the prisons are failing to accomplish any goal other than removing some individuals who are dangerous from daily life.

Hypothesis #16: While Americans feel that the criminal justice system is failing, their attitudes are often changed or modified when they consider the issue in terms of certain specifics.

To the extent that the criminal system is felt to fail in terms of its primary goal, -- that is, to prevent crime -- it is, as far as the public is concerned, a total failure. "It used to be that 'crime doesn't pay,'" said a woman from San Diego. "But now it seems that 'crime does pay.' There's no deterrent." Another man said, "Our laws have failed and our prison institutions have definitely failed -- they don't rehabilitate anyone."

Nonetheless, we identified from these group interviews two factors that modified respondents' views about the criminal justice system and seemed to have a sobering or moderating effect. First, respondents' knowledge about numerous aspects of the system was low. For example, many did not understand how the courts work and what prison life is like. When those who gave judges and the courts low ratings were asked, in follow-up questioning, why they felt as they did, it became apparent that their views were often based on general impressions, not a detailed understanding. A man from Baltimore said, "Well, I'm not an expert on this [the courts and legal procedures], but I've read about cases in the news." In fact, follow-up questioning, by itself, seemed to take the edge off or mute much of respondents' frustration and caused many to modify their more sweeping views.

For example, when respondents were asked to consider specific steps to remedy what they named as a problem, they usually became more thoughtful, asked a number of questions and expressed the need for facts and figures. Similarly, those who complained about the shortcomings of prisons or the fact that inmates had an "easy time of it" often and quickly modified their views when, because of comments from other group members, they began to consider aspects of prison life -- overcrowding, violence, homosexual rape, lack of privacy, and other depravations -- that they had not given thought to before.

Second, respondents also tended to modify their views when they examined specific cases instead of talking around the issue in general or globally. Most were consistently predisposed to view the issue of criminal justice from the point of view of a potential victim. Within that frame of reference, people considered offenders generically as generally guilty, and said that delays and appeals merely postpone justice. But when respondents were asked to consider specific cases, their reactions often changed. When, for example, they were asked about hypothetical criminals with particular personal histories who had committed particular crimes, they considered each case quite thoughtfully and with understanding; they wrestled with the facts, as if feeling the weight of their responsibility to determine what justice is. At those moments, respondents acted more like jurors, weighing evidence and trying to arrive at a just verdict, rather than like potential victims trying to design a system that would prevent future attacks.

Commentary: No matter how well a particular component of the system may perform, it will receive little spontaneous public support or acknowledgement unless citizens feel that the primary goal of deterrence is being served. When an election day bond measure to borrow money to build more prisons is put on the ballot, there are at least two obstacles blocking voters from voting for it (even though, at the same time, they support measures such as mandatory sentencing laws that increase prison overcrowding): first, the public does not think about criminal justice in terms of problems within the system; and second, since citizens do not think the prisons achieve their primary goal, they reason, 'Why build more of them?' These results suggest several implications for those who want to focus public attention on the issue. Helping citizens to see the human dimensions of the criminal justice issue in terms of both victim and offender may cause citizens to abandon the framework they adopt reflexively -- that of potential victim. And while people may always feel that the system's main goal should be to discourage crime, they

may take a broader view of what that goal might include if they begin to see some of the complexities affecting the system -- difficulties like prison overcrowding or the logjam in the courts. In other work, Public Agenda has found that the more people consider the complexities of an issue, the more their initial views become tempered, differentiated and thoughtful. This pattern held true with this issue as well.

SECTION IV

HYPOTHESES: AMERICANS' VIEWS ABOUT PRISON OVERCROWDING AND ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

Hypothesis #17: While Americans are aware of prison overcrowding, they do not recognize its impact on the criminal justice system as a whole or on the ability of prisons to meet the goals the public sets for them -- removing dangerous individuals from society and giving them some chance at rehabilitation.

Virtually everyone interviewed knew before the sessions that prisons in the United States are seriously overcrowded. "It's on the news all the time," a San Diego man said. "Sure we know it [that prisons are overcrowded]," said a man from Westchester County, to general agreement in the group. "Everyone knows that the prisons are overcrowded." A man from Houston said, "It [prison overcrowding] has been in all the papers."

But most respondents were not familiar with the dimensions of the problem. Most did not know, for example, that about a half-million people are now incarcerated in the U.S., that in 20 states prisons are so overcrowded they refuse to accept new prisoners, that 31 states are under court order to reduce overcrowding and improve related conditions, and that the country was building new prisons at about half the rate at which new prisoners are being incarcerated, so that overcrowding will become worse. In a sense, people acknowledge that prison overcrowding is a problem, but they do not truly see it as a problem that requires immediate decisions or actions.

Most respondents accepted facts such these as true, expressing surprise at the magnitude of the problem, especially the rate at which overcrowding is increasing. A man from St. Louis said: "I knew it [prison overcrowding] was bad, but I didn't know it was <u>that</u> bad." Most of the people interviewed believed these figures; virtually no one said they were exaggerated. However, what the figures really mean was not necessarily real or concrete for some respondents. A woman from Westchester County said, "I'm listening to these facts, but they don't hit home to me. I don't know what the situation is exactly. I would like to go there and see the facts myself before saying anything."

In some of the group sessions, respondents were given information about some of the internal effects of prison overcrowding. The moderator said that in the view of many experts, overcrowding exacerbates problems involving prison violence, assaults on both inmates and prison officials, suicides, uprisings, the spread of disease and other health-related issues, and work, education and job training programs for inmates. Nearly everyone interviewed had not considered any of these implications. Indeed, the more people considered these effects of overcrowding, the more serious they thought the problem was. A woman from Westchester County said, "Anybody in an overcrowded situation starts to feel uncomfortable. I know how I feel if I'm in an overcrowded elevator -- I just want to get out." Respondents also found it easy to grasp the effects in terms of violence, etc. Another woman said, "If they're outside, sleeping in a hall, where they lose all their dignity and feel like they're no one, of course it's going to cause problems. They're not even a person anymore. They don't even know who or what they are. I never knew how bad it [prison overcrowding] is, I never thought about it before."

Many, however, found it more difficult to understand the effect of overcrowding on work, job training programs and education. The moderator then informed the group about the view of some experts that overcrowding actually increases idleness among inmates since work, job training and education programs all require resources, supervisors, instructors, materials, facilities and space. When respondents comprehended these implications, they expressed particular concern: most felt that these were particularly serious effects because, in their view, implementation of each of these activities was a priority for the prison system. Indeed, some even grew angry when they considered these effects, and said that the whole (or most important) purpose of incarceration was lost as a result.

Commentary: This result suggests that those who wish to bring to public attention the idea of alternatives to incarceration should start here, with the dimensions of prison overcrowding and the severe impact it has on the whole criminal justice system. Since most people already know about overcrowding, they will find further more detailed information credible and

understandable. And since they want the prisons to serve as a means to remove dangerous individuals from society and therefore reduce the risk of further crime, it is essential that they see how prison overcrowding both affects the work of the police and contributes to the ineffectiveness (in the public's view) of the courts. Unless these connections are clearly and explicitly pointed out, prison overcrowding may be seen merely as a "quality of life" issue for inmates.

People tend to have conflicting views about prison life -- seeing it simultaneously as "soft and easy" on the one hand, yet horrifying and dangerous, on the other. But most of the people in the Public Agenda groups had not thought carefully about the impact of overcrowding on the horror of prison or on a prison's ability to organize productive activities for inmates.

Criminal justice professionals and other experts who want to bring the issue of prison overcrowding to public attention will find that, when people understand the connection, most Americans will be responsive to the argument that overcrowding leads to increased idleness and reduced opportunities for job training and educational programs. Other effects such as increased violence and the potential for uprisings, for example, were also considered important and will generate public attention and concern, but the implications of overcrowding on day-to-day prison life was by far the most dramatic and important consequence to those interviewed. People are persuaded that a primary goal of prison should be rehabilitation in the broadest sense -- and that entails making prisoners work, both to learn a skill and to keep themselves occupied. Overcrowding which leads to idleness and makes such rehabilitation less likely defeats most of the purpose of incarceration.

Hypothesis #18: Americans may, at least initially, resist confronting realistically the choices presented by prison overcrowding and try to devise unrealistic solutions or engage in wishful thinking.

Respondents sometimes found it difficult to examine realistically the issue of prison overcrowding. The moderator told them that many experts felt there were three ways to solve the problem: build more prisons, repeal mandatory sentencing and other such laws, or make much greater use of alternatives to incarceration. While there was some support, under certain circumstances, for increased use of alternatives to incarceration, (see below for a detailed account of reactions to this idea), many rejected considering the issue in terms of only these three choices.

In several sessions, for example, group members responded to questions about overcrowding by trying to change the subject and discuss other aspects of the issue: how, in their view, prison life is not tough enough on inmates, for example; or the impact of drugs on the crime rate; or the failure of the entire criminal justice system to discourage criminal behavior. A few described particular cases that they saw as miscarriages of justice, though those cases were unrelated to overcrowding or to the moderator's question. These attempts suggest that for many it was hard to confront the issue, and that some felt the need to avoid it altogether and to talk about other issues on which they had already reached a conclusion.

A tack taken by other respondents was to concoct wildly unrealistic alternatives to add to the three offered by the moderator. In Houston, for example, two respondents said that prison overcrowding could be reduced if young violent offenders were put in the Armed Forces. They continued to insist that this was a viable option even after a retired officer in the group told them that the Armed Forces would not accept such people in the first place and that, even if the Armed Forces did accept them, the implications of arming violent offenders to the teeth -- giving them M-16s and grenades -- was preposterous and frightening. A few people in both San Diego and Houston said

that the churches and other private organizations could take more responsibility for convicted offenders by, in effect, serving as substitute prisons at no cost to taxpayers. And one woman suggested deportation. "Why not just throw them out of the country?" she said. "I'm serious; send them out. Good bye!"

Another idea several people offered for dealing with overcrowding was to increase the use of capital punishment. A man from Houston said, "One reason why these prisons are so overcrowded is the lack of ability of the United States to take someone convicted of murder, someone who is supposed to be executed, and execute him." Another man said, "Before they started holding the death penalty off, people who did something drastic knew they were going to die. Now, because everybody gets reprieve after reprieve, he'll be there for 20 years and say 'What the heck, I don't care; they're gonna feed me, and clothe me -- but they're not gonna kill me because the people of the United States wouldn't let them.' It [the way the death penalty is administered] is almost a reverse deterrent." In San Diego, respondents said that much cell space is taken up by convicted murderers who were either "jailhouse lawyers," wasting taxpayers' money by frivolously appealing their cases again and again, or by those who had been given life when they could have been -- and should have been -- executed.

Most of those interviewed rather quickly abandoned the idea that capital punishment could significantly reduce prison overcrowding, once they were reminded of the dimensions of the problem -- including the fact that a half-million people are in jail while only a fraction of them are on death row. However, respondents' frustration about "endless appeals" and what they called "so-called life sentences where murderers really get out after a few years" were deep and real. And so most of those interviewed continued to favor the use of capital punishment for that and a variety of reasons, including its impact on prison overcrowding, however incremental.

Commentary: In its work on numerous social issues, the Public Agenda has often found that the initial reaction of citizens who are asked to consider a difficult issue is to look for easy answers. In work on the federal deficit, for example, citizens often said that the deficit could be reduced without raising taxes or cutting spending -- if waste, fraud and abuse were eliminated from federal spending and if tax loopholes were closed. (While these views do have an understandable basis in fact, the conclusion that the elimination of waste could, by itself, have a substantial effect on the deficit is little more than wishful thinking.) In work on that and other issues, the Public Agenda has found that citizens often cling to such ideas and, by so doing, avoid the realistic choices and tough decisions these issues require.

With the issue of prison overcrowding, we encountered a similar result. Respondents often expressed views that were based on wishful thinking or an unrealistic assessment of various components of the issue. And the unrealistic solutions that were mentioned in these sessions probably do not exhaust the list that others will come up with. A common reaction to consideration of prison overcrowding will almost certainly be calls for the use of the death penalty; some people will almost certainly conclude that greater use of the death penalty is at least a partial solution to the problem of overcrowding. Criminal justice professionals and other experts concerned about bringing the issue of overcrowding to public attention, therefore, should be prepared to anticipate that people will almost certainly try to avoid the hard choices. The issue will have to be presented carefully.

Hypothesis #19: Americans believe that prison overcrowding is caused by an increase in crime. They resist or simply do not believe that the crime rate has gone down or that mandatory sentencing and stiffer sentencing practices are the cause of prison overcrowding.

When asked to name the causes of prison overcrowding, most respondents said, with conviction and certainty, that overcrowding is caused by an increase in crime. "There's more crime now than there ever was," a man from Houston said. A Boston woman said, "The crime rate here goes up every year. Crime has increased everyplace." Several respondents blamed the increase on the drug problem. One woman said, "I think narcotics is more prevalent in the past three years than it's ever been. And a lot more prisoners are in because of that."

Other respondents suggested that crime was increasing for somewhat different reasons. A Houston man said, "A lot of the rise in crime [in Houston] is due to unemployment. We're [the people in Texas] going through some pretty hard times." A woman from Westchester County blamed what she called "the attitudes of a racist society where people do not have the opportunities or the training they need to make a decent living." And many respondents suggested that, in one way or another, rising crime was the result of the criminal justice system's failure to discourage it. "People realize that our system today is not going to enforce what's written, that you're not going to have to pay the price. There's no deterrent [for breaking the law] because the system is set up to undo everything," said a woman from Houston.

When respondents were told that the national crime rate had actually decreased or levelled off over the last several years and that, as a result, prison overcrowding was probably not caused by an increase in crime, many expressed skepticism or disbelief. "Well, crime may be going down in some parts of the country," a Houston man said, "but that's not the case here." Others questioned the source of the figures, or the kinds of crimes that were included in the estimates. A woman from San Diego said, "I don't believe those figures take into account drugs. The drug problem is everywhere -- in the schools, the parks, you name it."

Several respondents seemed to resent the data and the interpretation itself. It flew in the face of what they believed to be true. Several people suggested that the figures were a statistical misrepresentation of what was actually the case, suggesting that the figures were incorrect though they did not know why. One man speculated that while the overall crime rate, including white collar crime, may be going down, the incidence of violent crime and other crimes against people was going up; as a result, he said, the figures might be accurate in a general or abstract sense, but they were misleading in terms of what was most important to people.

Respondents were asked to react to the view of many experts that prison overcrowding is due to the enactment of mandatory sentencing laws, stiffer penalties imposed by state legislatures, and reductions in the authority of judges and parole boards. Mandatory sentencing was a popular idea. Respondents felt that it helped make sentences more uniform and punishment more predictable -- both of which, they felt, had the effect of discouraging crime. Most of the people interviewed tended to disregard any connection between these laws and overcrowding. "I don't think they're the cause of the problem," a St. Louis man said, to general agreement. Others found it hard to understand how these factors could cause overcrowding, and in one session the moderator had to explain the connection several times.

Commentary: It was often striking to see people respond to the argument that prison overcrowding is caused by mandatory sentencing and stiffer sentencing by the courts. Experts in public opinion have long known about a phenomenon called "cognitive dissonance," a type of intellectual tension created when people confront facts or arguments that conflict with other views they trust, and with their deeply held values. The amount of dissonance created will vary, depending on the facts and arguments presented, the credibility of their source, and the depth or degree of importance with which individuals hold the view or value that is in conflict. Reactions to the argument that mandatory sentencing, and stiffer sentencing, have led to the crisis of prison overcrowding that faces the country are examples cognitive dissonance. Since

people strongly favor mandatory sentencing, seeing it as a more orderly, predictable, rational, fair, and just system for sentencing offenders, they reject the argument that it has created a serious dilemma for the the criminal justice system. People tend to deny that what they clearly consider a positive step -- a good -- has resulted in what they clearly see to be bad -- plea bargaining, early and easier parole, and overcrowded prisons warehousing idle inmates.

Cognitive dissonance is reduced when individuals begin to incorporate new facts and arguments into their understanding of an issue. It requires time and a process of what psychologists term, "working through," since new information must be integrated into a set of existing views and values. If new information creates too much tension, people may feel compelled to deny its truth or existence: If people are confronted with facts that contradict too many of their deeply held values, their initial reaction is sometimes their only reaction -- to disregard the information or to "shoot the messenger."

In much of its citizen education work, Public Agenda deliberately creates dissonance, pointing out to people the inconsistencies in their thinking in order to help them see an issue more realistically. But on the issue of prison overcrowding and mandatory sentencing, the dissonance created was too great to be overcome even in a two hour, personalized, small group setting. Even at the end of these sessions, after people had spent two hours thinking about prison overcrowding, most did not believe that mandatory sentencing had contributed significantly to prison overcrowding.

The extent of resistance in this area has implications for those trying to take the issue to the public. People already know about and accept the fact of prison overcrowding. They do not understand its dimensions, and they do not understand the stress it has put on the criminal justice system and the degree to which is prevents prisons from meeting the goals the public sets for them.

Helping people confront these aspects of the prison overcrowding problem will accomplish a great deal. But to try simultaneously to explain the causes of overcrowding -- and to ask people to accept explanations that run counter to their sense of the way things should be -- may be, these groups suggest, just too much for people to digest. In fact, in the Public Agenda groups, discussions about the causes of prison overcrowding tended to distract attention from the problem itself. Extensive efforts to make people understand the role mandatory sentencing plays in prison overcrowding, even if they were successful, might well be gratuitous since the public is highly unlikely to back the repeal of mandatory sentencing at present, or to seek more lenient sentencing practices as a means to easing prison overcrowding.

Hypothesis #20: Americans feel that greater efforts should be taken to make prison life harder, to make inmates more productive, and to make prisons economically self-sufficient.

Importantly, and with the exception of those few who complained about amenities, most of those who felt that prison idleness was a problem were not interested in punishment per se. Rather, they saw work as therapeutic and beneficial to both society and to the prisoners themselves. "I'm not talking about forced labor," said a woman from Houston. "I mean mandatory labor, teach them a trade, get them doing something useful." A San Diego man said, "All prisoners should have some responsibility within the system -- where at least they work from 8:00 to 5:30." A woman from St. Louis said the prisons should teach prisoners "a sense of responsibility and how to take care of themselves." A man from Westchester County talked about the importance of providing opportunities for education. "Education is important. It's important that when they [inmates] come out, they feel good about themselves, good enough to pick up their lives, start over, and not want to go back again."

Indeed, for a number of respondents, work and productive activity had an intrinsic and an instrumental value. For example, a man from San Diego said that, even if job training and education are not feasible, inmates should have to work for reasons related to self-esteem. "I think that even if prisons can't teach them [the inmates] anything, they should keep them active by using them as clean up crews for the parks and freeways. Anything to keep them physically active. That would keep them in shape and make them feel more useful and better about themselves," he said.

A number of respondents felt that prisons should and could be economically self-sufficient, or that prisoners could work building something that would benefit the community. "Prisoners could work at something more than license plates that would reduce the costs," a Baltimore man said. "I'm not talking about chain gangs, or anything like that. I mean building furniture or something that could be sold." A man from St. Louis said, "When a guy goes to prison he should do something that's going to pay off. Put him outside,

farming or something, until he makes enough to pay back what he stole." A man from Houston offered this suggestion: "One way to alleviate overcrowding," he said, "is to put the prisoners to work building a new prison." When some questioned how realistic this idea was, several members in the group said that inmates had constructed a community college in one town. "They built the whole thing," one woman said. "I know they did because I went to school there. And it's a beautiful building too." A San Diego man suggested that prisoners could be used to clean up the beaches and parks. "We'd have to be careful who we let out to do it," he said. "You wouldn't wanted a convicted rapist escaping on the beach. And they'd have to be very closely supervised. But there's so much that needs to be done -- I don't see why we don't have prisoners doing it instead of sitting around doing nothing."

Commentary: A number of respondents expressed the view that prison life was "too soft." While only a few of the people interviewed complained about amenities such as color televisions or VCRs (along with a cache of pornographic movies in the case of mass murderer, John Gacy), most who expressed the view meant something substantive: that prisoners do not work enough, that they do not have to do something productive, that too many of them are constantly idle and spend whole days doing nothing but playing cards and watching television.

People feel strongly that prison life should be meaningful and productive and that prisons should be economically self-sufficient. Those views relate directly to the issue of overcrowding. When people understand that overcrowding leads to warehousing of inmates, that it actually prevents any real efforts at job training or productive prison work, the overcrowding issue takes on an urgency it otherwise lacks.

Hypothesis #21: Americans are more inclined to support alternatives to incarceration when they understand the cost of building and maintaining new prisons.

Respondents support for the use of alternatives to incarceration grew as they became more aware of the cost of incarceration and of building new prisons. Virtually no one in any of the sessions realized or had any idea how expensive prisons are to build and operate. Respondents were told that the average prison "bed" costs about $100,000 to build and about $30,000 a year for daily maintenance. They were given expert estimates that it might cost up to $50 billion, or nearly $1,000 in taxes per typical American family, merely to build enough prisons to house those already incarcerated in uncrowded conditions. Most respondents found these figures surprising.

While respondents sometimes resisted looking at prison overcrowding in terms of the three most widely discussed options -- building more prisons, repeal of mandatory sentencing, or using more alternatives to incarceration -- most eventually did so. When they did digest the degree of overcrowding, the increasing incarceration rate and the number of new prisons needed, many found the financial factors compelling reason for further thought.

A man from San Diego said, "I don't care what anybody says, you have to keep coming back to economics. Prisons cost you [taxpayers] money; community service saves you money." A man from St. Louis said, "It [alternatives to incarceration] is a good idea because you can see how much it is going to cost to build a prison and the money is not available. So they've [decisionmakers] got to come up with something that is less expensive." A man from Westchester suggested that a combination of approaches was needed. "I would support an increase in taxes to get more prison space, but at the same time we should work hand in hand with alternatives of restitution and community service. You can't do one without the other."

Commentary: One of the most powerful arguments for alternatives to incarceration involves the economics of prison overcrowding. As we discuss in detail in the following hypothesis, people favor the use of alternatives for reasons unrelated to economics and taxes. Nonetheless, helping them understand the cost of prison construction and maintenance provides for many the first strong motive to consider seriously the greater use of alternatives to incarceration.

Hypothesis #22: The most important source of public support for alternatives to incarceration, however, may be the belief that prisons are failing to accomplish their primary objectives.

Substantial support for trying alternatives to incarceration seemed to stem from a belief that society has to try new alternatives because, as well as being too expensive, the present system simply does not work. A San Diego woman summed up the views of many: "The system is not working. The people running it aren't giving prisoners enough discipline or initiative. If you don't have it run better, you don't have anything."

An assumption underlying much of respondents' support for alternatives involved the need to build up offenders' sense of responsibility, self-esteem, and self-reliance. A Houston man's comment about one offender was typical: "Let's try to straighten this guy out, teach him a trade." Time and again respondents said that the prisons do not rehabilitate. One man said, "We all know that the prisons have failed. They don't rehabilitate, they don't educate prisoners -- except to make them more streetwise when they get out." A woman from St. Louis said, "I don't think that prisons rehabilitate anyone. That's a pretty well proven fact."

One man said, "Building more prisons is not the answer. Period." A San Diego woman said, "Nobody wants more prisons -- not in their neighborhood, their county, or even their state." A Westchester County man said, "I guess we could take the attitude that you take them [offenders] and send them off to Siberia or somewhere. But that's not going to solve the problem." A man from St. Louis said, "We need to brainstorm. Let's look at all these things: release programs, community work programs, local control, probation -- set up a probationary board like a jury system where people have to serve."

Commentary: It would be a mistake to conclude that only economics and the threat of increasing taxes will motivate people to consider the use of alternatives to incarceration. Indeed, for many, stressing the positive aspect of the alternatives -- job training, paying one's debt to society, getting people off drugs and alcohol -- may lead them to look at alternatives more carefully and with more of an open mind than "dollars and cents" arguments.

People strongly favor the idea of rehabilitation; they want the criminal justice system to discourage future crime, and are concerned that it is failing to accomplish that objective. As discussed in the following hypothesis, people will give the most serious consideration to the use of alternatives if they feel they provide a good chance at "turning criminals around."

Hypothesis: #23: Americans strongly favor the use of alternatives to incarceration in particular cases.

With virtual unanimity -- and with certain qualifications which will be detailed -- respondents endorsed the use of alternatives to incarceration. Various alternatives were described, including restitution, community service, fines, mandatory treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, intensive or enriched parole, the use of halfway houses, and mandatory attendence at a job, school or job training facility. People in several groups were asked to consider particular cases, either devised by the Public Agenda, or taken from Overcrowded Time, published by the Clark Foundation, or adapted from Do They Belong In Prison?, prepared by The Correctional Association of New York, or prominently reported in The New York Times. In each case cited, respondents were asked how the offender should be punished.

In a number of specific cases presented to four groups -- Westchester County, St. Louis, San Diego, and Houston -- respondents said, with near unanimity, that the offender should be sentenced to at least one of the available alternatives, rather than be incarcerated. One case involved a youth who, while drinking and smoking marijuana, had crashed his pick-up truck into a tree, killing ten of his friends who were riding in the back. The driver had no previous record so, instead of incarceration, the judge sentenced him to work in a hospital's Shock Trauma Unit for 3,000. Respondents asked whether the driver had a record of offenses. When the moderator said no, they said, with virtual unanimity, that this was a much better sentence than time in prison. "Making him work there [in a Shock Trauma Unit] is a lot better than putting him in prison," one man said. "He'll face it [what he did] day after day, see the effects of accidents, and what they does to people and their families. It'll scare hell out of him." A number of respondents felt that making offenders see the effects of their crime on victims would help them realize the damage they've caused. Many respondents approved of this punishment for reasons similar to those offered by a woman from Boston, who said, "Maybe the biggest failure with our criminal justice system right now is that these people [criminals] aren't brought face to face, in touch with the damage they do to other people."

Respondents also strongly favored the idea of restitution -- where an offender had to repay his victim. "I think they should work and pay for the damage they do," said a Westchester County man. Support for this idea stemmed from two premises: first, victims would be compensated, at least in part; second, and more important, offenders would be forced to confront the effects of what they had done. A woman from St. Louis said, "People who have to pay restitution should do it face to face. Then they'll develop a real sense of responsibility and a real sense of guilt for what they have done. Because if you don't have to look at the results of your actions, then it's easier to discount them."

The idea of community service also found support. A man from Westchester County said, "People who go to prison, who commit a crime, have no respect for society and no respect for themselves. The restitution part, the community service part -- that's fine. Utilize manpower, put it to use." A San Diego woman said, "I think a majority of prisoners shouldn't be in there, they should be organized and farmed out to do public service." A Houston woman said, "As long as they are in a situation [i.e., prison] where they're only in touch with people like themselves, they do not improve. I think he needs to be in a situation where he is working, but extremely closely supervised."

In numerous cases, respondents felt that a combination of alternatives should be employed simultaneously. For example, many felt that mandatory drug abuse treatment, intensive or "enriched" parole, and halfway houses could be used in conjunction with the alternatives mentioned above. But support for the use of alternatives was deep and often enthusiastic. "I think it [restitution, etc.] would be a terrific thing, that would put people to work who maybe didn't know what it was like to work. It would be like starting somebody off in a career who wouldn't have had a chance otherwise."

However, respondents did express concern about the effectiveness of supervision and insisted that alternatives be carefully administered. A man from Houston said, "Put him [an offender] in a situation where he could be

useful [such as working in community service]; put him where he could be physically out there [and not incarcerated]. But he should be kept under close supervision." Respondents also felt that alternative programs should be structured so that offenders who fail to fulfill the requirements would be quickly incarcerated, and that such a condition should be made clear to offenders ahead of time and strictly enforced. A man from St. Louis said, "I think he [the offender in an alternative program] needs a good parole officer and that he should report to him every day. And the guy [the offender] has got to know that if he doesn't do what he's supposed to, then is he going to jail."

Commentary: The goal in this phase of the research was to learn how respondents viewed alternatives in general, and what they thought of particular alternatives. We then attempted to identify what criteria people applied in determining which particular offenders were most suited for which alternatives, and the conditions they attached to the different alternatives, if any.

The support for alternatives to incarceration was often clear and direct. When alternatives were felt to serve the interests of "justice" by providing means of restitution, and the interests of society by ensuring that the prisoner both face the implications of his crime and undertake work that could prove useful, support was very strong. Making offenders "face" the damage they'd caused, people suggested, would be a far more effective way of reducing the chances that he would repeat his crime. More generally, people's reasoning for the use of alternatives was thoroughly consistent with the premises that form the basis for their views about other aspects of the issue.

Hypothesis #24: While favoring alternatives generally, Americans would nonetheless, restrict their use to certain types of offenders, excluding violent or repeat offenders and drug dealers.

In discussing the use of alternatives, respondents felt their use should be limited to certain types of offenders. Violent or repeat offenders should be ineligible, most said. A San Diego woman said, "I'm all for restitution for people who have not committed violent crimes. But if it's a crime where someone was hurt, I'm opposed, because they [the offenders] have taken away someone's rights." A Westchester man said, "It [the use of alternatives] depends on the crime. Like that guy who killed all those kids in a McDonald's -- he should get the death penalty." A woman from Boston said, "I think a person with a criminal mentality who keeps attacking society needs to be treated very sternly, as opposed to someone who made a mistake and is ready to join society again." While not asked directly to define who was a "repeat offender," reactions and comments about particular case histories, including cases involving offenders with more than one conviction, suggest that most of those interviewed defined a "repeat offender" as someone with more than two convictions, or with two convictions in a short period of time.

Drug dealers were consistently seen as "violent" offenders. Asked about a case reported in The New York Times, where a small-time drug dealer who had been repeatedly arrested for selling and using narcotics, a man from Houston said, "He definitely needs to go to jail." Another man said, "That type of man needs to be put away, and I'm talking about 15 years. But at the same time, do something with him. Let him dig ditches or something during the day. Make him think about the time he has to pay." The sentence actually imposed on the drug offender was one year.

Respondents had mixed feelings about the use of fines. While some thought they were a good idea in the abstract, others expressed concern about two aspects. First, several respondents worried that the fines would not be stiff enough. A woman from San Diego said, "We had a case here of white collar crime and he [the offender] was fined a drop in the bucket. If they're fined a good amount, so that it really hurts, that would be better than sending them to some 'country club' prison for a few months to hobnob with other affluent criminals. That might be a deterrent." A respondent from Houston said, "As long as the fine is large enough to hurt, really hurt [the offender], then it might be a good idea." Some respondents expressed concern about the question of equal justice, when fines are an alternative. A Westchester County woman worried that for the same offense, a poor black would be sent to prison while an affluent white criminal would "get off" with a fine. "They [the poor] can't afford to pay. So if it [a system of fines] is set up so that those who can afford to, pay a fine but those who don't have the money to pay, have to go to prison, I would be against it."

A San Diego man offered this about white collar criminals: "If you sentence someone who already has a five-day-a-week job to community service on the weekends, it would make them think a whole lot more before they went and did it [the crime] again. It would hurt them a lot more than a fine which they could pay off and forget. It's degrading to be out there, cleaning up the highways, especially if you have a good job during the week."Respondents in several groups spontaneously brought up the idea of publicly embarrassing offenders. A woman from San Diego said, "I think it [public embarrassment] would be a good deterrent." A Houston woman suggested that drunk drivers be forced to have bumper stickers on their cars or a notation on their driver's license that read: "I was convicted for drunk driving."

Commentary: One implication for those who want to bring the issue of prison overcrowding and alternatives to incarceration to public attention is that people will be very unlikely to support alternatives for all types of criminals. Alternatives were not considered suitable for violent or repeat offenders, or for drug dealers.

People also expressed concern that the alternative sentence be designed to have an "impact" upon the criminal, and that they should reflect even-handed or "just" treatment by treating like offenders in a similar manner. Reservations about fines are rooted in the value of equal justice and the feeling that the wealthy might get off while the poor and others will serve time.

Those who wish to have the public seriously consider particular alternatives should be cognizant of the underlying concern. Public embarrassment was considered -- by those who supported the idea -- as a way to make sure the particular offender, and as well as potential offenders, would be dealt with in a way that would be most likely to result in their not repeating the offense. Fines are acceptable insofar as they are designed to have an effectively deterrent impact. And habitual offenders are not seen as eligible for alternative treatment. In every instance, these views reflect the conviction that punishment should be designed to reduce the likelihood that other crimes will occur in the future.

A NOTE ON PUBLIC DEBATE

The Public Agenda's discussions with typical citizens around the country, and its analysis of survey data from major public opinion studies on the criminal justice system over the last ten years, were designed to explore crime and corrections in general but emphasized, particularly in the last sessions, the issue of prison overcrowding and alternatives to incarceration. This aspect of issue has not been extensively explored and has, received relatively little broad public discussion and debate. Because many states and localities face urgent decisions on this issue, and because it is, based on our observations, poorly understood by large numbers of Americans, we have reflected on how the issue might be presented so that Americans will give it their serious attention and acquire sufficient information to come to their own conclusions about how best to address the problem.

The design of public education instruments is, of course, an art in itself. But some initial cautions are clearly already in order. The Public Agenda research has yielded several observations that may be helpful to all of those who think of bringing this issue of prison overcrowding to the public for an open-minded and constructive debate.

1. <u>People need to have their very real and personal fear of crime acknowledged and responded to.</u> Perhaps more than any other issue that the Public Agenda has dealt with over the past few years, the problem of crime evokes in people a fear that is immediate and directly focussed on themselves and those they love. Discussions of prisons, prison conditions, and possible alternatives to incarceration must keep uppermost in mind that people's primary goal is the prevention of future crime. To the degree that the discussion takes account of and addresses -- rather than dismisses or denigrates -- the real concern people have, there is an opportunity for open-minded and constructive consideration of a range of possibilities and new ideas.

   Helping citizens see the human dimensions of the criminal justice issue in terms of <u>both</u> victim and offender may cause citizens to abandon the framework they adopt reflexively -- that of potential victim. And

while people are likely always to feel that the system's main goal should be to discourage crime, they may adopt a broader view of how to achieve that goal following discussion of some of the complexities affecting the system. People can understand, for example, how prison overcrowding encourages plea bargaining or early parole; and that concept, once grasped, can encourage rather than inhibit further enquiry on their part. The Public Agenda has found that the more people consider the complexities of an issue, the more their initial views become tempered, differentiated and thoughtful.

2. People want the criminal justice system to keep its promises. What offends and discourages people about the current system of criminal justice, as they perceive it, is its seeming inability to set rules and enforce them without fail. Criminals are arrested for one crime but they are tried for something less serious. They are arrested promptly, but then roam free for months, sometimes years, until they are actually tried and convicted. The law says that a crime may warrant a sentence of "x" years, but offenders serve far less. The people we spoke with were far less concerned about the length of a particular sentence set for a particular crime than they were about its predictable imposition on the criminal. People want the law to set a penalty and they want those who break the law to serve the penalty immediately, entirely, and without fail, always.

Public frustration with what they see as the criminal justice system's inability to keep its promises may be used to some advantage in getting people to look seriously at the prison overcrowding issue. If people understand the connection between prison overcrowding and practices which disturb them -- extensive plea bargaining, early release programs, dismissal of charges for offenses that, given the stress on the system, are deemed to be "small potatoes" -- alternatives such as restitution and fines (if they are real penalties rather than slaps on the wrist for the wealthy or the children of the wealthy) may, for many, meet some of the demands for explicit, real punishments to a greater degree than imprisonment does.

3. People understand and have empathy for those who "make mistakes," but their patience is not unending. Those who wish the public to look carefully at alternatives to imprisonment can have confidence that for most Americans there is real tolerance for those who make mistakes in life but want to improve. The public believes strongly that criminals are made, not born, and they believe in both the importance and the possibility of rehabilitation. Moreover, people's ability to empathize is strengthened when they consider specific individuals with real hardships, real families, and a real life to be salvaged.

However, people are not so sympathetic as to put themselves, their families and their neighbors at risk by giving a third or fourth chance to someone who keeps running afoul of the law. And the public's tendency to draw the line does not seem to be greatly affected by the relative youth of the offender or the relative seriousness of the crime. The implications here for those who want to develop policies likely to win broad public support are obvious. Alternatives to incarceration can win support if they provide a second chance to those seen to deserve a second chance.

4. People are concerned about more than money with regard to making the criminal justice system work. People in the Public Agenda groups were surprised at the seriousness of prison overcrowding and shocked by its financial implications. Indeed, facts about the cost of solving prison overcrowding solely by expanding prison capacity were helpful in getting people to look at the problem thoughtfully -- that is, to see it as a problem requiring decision-making in their communities and states.

However, it would be a misinterpretation of the public mind to assume that money is the only motivation people have to look carefully at current incarceration policies, or that money outweighs all other considerations in dealing with prison overcrowding. Greater effectiveness in helping offenders turn their lives around, was, for

many of the people we spoke to, the main benefit of many alternatives to incarceration. And those who wish to bring these ideas to the public for an open-minded consideration would be well advised to describe them fully, rather than concentrating solely on how much money they may save.

There are, moreover, areas where Americans' minds are unlikely to be changed, despite the possibility of significant cost savings. Repeal of mandatory sentencing is one example. The public sees mandatory sentencing as a necessary, fair, and workable correction to major flaws in the criminal justice system. Our research suggests that it would be an uphill, perhaps Sysiphean, battle to convince people that the repeal of such laws is a viable solution to the prison overcrowding dilemma.

Similarly, while the cost of prisons and their perceived ineffectiveness encouraged many people to explore alternatives to incarceration for many types of nonviolent, first and second offenders, drug sellers were not among them. To the people we spoke with, drug selling was, de facto, a violent crime. And we should point out that our discussions with Americans about crime and drugs preceded the extensive publicity about the "crack epidemic," publicity which is likely to strengthen people's convictions in this area.

5. People need to be reassured that alternatives to incarceration will be tightly-administered, and that all reasonable steps will be taken to insure that public safety is not endangered. The people we spoke with expressed considerable concern about what they saw as an overburdened, overextended, sometimes lax, criminal justice system, which favors offenders at the expense of public safety. To garner support for alternatives to incarceration, and to assure that support extends beyond a short-lived, "first blush" wave of interest in a new idea, people will have to see alternatives to incarceration as something quite different

from what they understand the present parole or release systems to be. They need to see alternatives that are tightly administered, strictly limited to nonviolent and first or second time offenders, and that truly impose some penalty or hardship on offenders. Moreover, initial public support could wane rapidly if people begin to perceive alternatives as a "slap on the wrist," or "a revolving door," offered to offenders who time and again run afoul of the law.

f. People need to understand something about the individuals who might qualify for alternative programs. In the Public Agenda discussion groups, people were better able to understand how alternatives might work -- and why they might be more effective than imprisonment at deterring offenders from returning to crime -- when they had examples of real people, real crimes, and real lives to think about. People were often more open to new ways of dealing with offenders when they were presented with specific cases than when thinking about crime in general.

Thus those who want the public to give serious consideration to alternatives to incarceration would be well advised to be specific and detailed in their descriptions of such programs and to use individual examples -- case studies -- in explaining how they might work. However, keeping in mind the public's concern about crime and their perception that all too often those who commit crimes receive little or no punishment, case studies cannot be "sob stories"; they must convincingly convey the stringency of the program and communicate clearly what has been learned by the offender. Even when the background of individual offenders has clearly contributed to their criminal behavior, alternative programs should not be seen as offering offenders advantages that are not given to law-abiding individuals from equally harsh and troubled backgrounds. There must be some loss of freedom, some restitution, some hardship -- and the public must understand what it is.

7. People need to know more about the magnitude of the prison overcrowding problem, and they need alternatives to consider. They do not need to become experts in the criminal justice system. There is always a temptation to believe that the more facts people have and the more fully they understand an issue, the more attention they will give to it. But there is a limit to the time and attention people will give to any social issue. People have misconceptions about why the prisons are overcrowded -- believeing that the crime rate has been steadily increasing over the last few years, for example -- but these group discussions have shown that extended efforts to educate people about the causes of prison overcrowding can be distracting and counterproductive. This implies that some care is needed in designing citizen education programs. It is essential that the limited time available in people's minds for this issue be used to help people understand that decisions are necessary and what these decisions entail in clear, concrete, human terms.

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A NOTE ON THE METHODOLOGY

Ten discussion groups, each lasting at least two hours, were conducted across the country in two series. The first series explored the public's attitude towards the general problem of crime, its causes and what they felt could be done to reduce it. The second series of groups examined the public's attitudes about incarceration and alternatives to incarceration. Sampling criteria for both sets of groups involved a cross-section of citizens stratified according to sex, age, education and race. No one interviewed was an employee of the criminal justice system, and no one had participated in a focus group in the previous year. The dates and cities for the groups are listed below.

	Location	Date
Series I:	1. New York City, N.Y.	April 10, 1986
	2. Little Rock, AK	April 15, 1986
	3. Minneapolis, MN	April 18, 1986
	4. Chicago, IL	April 22, 1986
	5. Boston, MA	May 13, 1986
	6. Atlanta, GA	May 21, 1986
Series II:	7. Westchester County, N.Y.	June 17, 1986
	8. San Diego, CA	June 24, 1986
	9. St. Louis, MO	July 9, 1986
	10. Houston, TX	July 10, 1986

Each of the focus group sessions was tape recorded. In addition to the moderators, observers from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation were present at the focus groups in Westchester County, New York. This final report was prepared by John Doble and Mark Rovner, with the assistance of Judith Kallick. The analyses and conclusions have been reviewed by and commented on by the Public Agenda's Executive Director, Robert J. Kingston, and its Co-Director, Jean Johnson.